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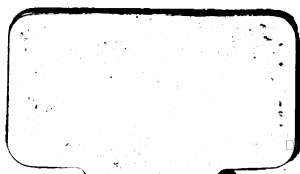
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Little Jeanneton's work

Cecilia Anne Jones





257. e. 2023



LITTLE JEANNETON'S WORK;

A CHRONICLE OF BRETON LIFE.

BY

C. A. JONES,

*Author of "Only a Girl," "Under the King's Banner,"
"Four Little Sixes," "Count up the Sunny Days," etc.*

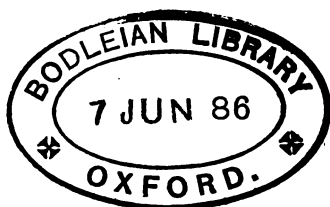
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TO
MRS. GLADSTONE,
IN VERY
GRATEFUL REMEMBRANCE OF MANY ACTS OF KINDNESS,
THIS
CHRONICLE OF BRETON LIFE
IS
(by her permission)
DEDICATED.

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LITTLE JEANNETON'S WORK.

A CHRONICLE OF BRETON LIFE.



CHAPTER I.

Thou shoreless flood—which, in thy ebb and flow,
Claspest the limits of mortality!

—*Shelley.*

CHAPTER I.

TIMES CHANGES.

‘WELL!’ said old Madame Levellec, the house-keeper at the Castle of Kerléonik, one of the most famous of Brittany’s many famous Castles, ‘this has indeed been a fatiguing day.’

The remark was made in an undertone, and might have been intended more as a soliloquy, than for the benefit of the little group of servants who surrounded the worthy old dame. That they fully endorsed her sentiments, as to the day’s hardships, was probable, from the fact that they sat about the great kitchen in a listless, purposeless fashion, not having taken the trouble even to light the candles in the iron sockets, which were against the walls, contenting themselves with the light which fell from the bundle of faggots recently thrown upon the hearth, which illuminated the old oak furniture with a strange glow, and threw out in fantastic shadows upon the ceiling, the forms of those who warmed themselves at the bright fire.

These were five in number, reposing, like weary people, upon the wooden benches: Marianne, the cook, and

Yvonne, the housemaid, and Margot, the scullery-maid, and Hervé, the coachman, and a little boy of fifteen, named Loie, whose duties were not particularly well defined,



and who therefore was somewhat the drudge of the other servants.

Madame Levellec, in deference to her exalted position, sat, of course, in the arm-chair, which it was one of Loie's duties always to place for her at a proper angle of the chimney corner.

But on this day of bustle and excitement, upon which our story begins, Loie had been too much occupied elsewhere to give a thought to the housekeeper's comforts, and the good dame herself was so heated by her numerous walks from one end of the huge castle to the other, that she sank down wearily into her chair near the window, its usual place during the day-time, and,

fanning herself vigorously with her pocket-handkerchief, gave utterance to the ejaculation aforesaid, 'this has indeed been a fatiguing day.'

'You may well say that, Madame Levellec,' said the cook; 'but it is not one day only that has been fatiguing—fifteen would be more like the truth. Think of the last days of the old Baroness; of the watching, after her death; of getting the Castle ready to receive the Baron and his friends; and then of the funeral feast! And such a feast! All the nobility of the country to be entertained. Let us hope there is a little rest in store for us now!'

'Rest!' echoed Madame Levellec, in a most dismal tone, 'Rest, indeed! Who can think of such a thing? To-night, perhaps, we may be able to get some repose, but to-morrow everything in the Castle must be turned topsy-turvy. How can it be otherwise in a place where nothing has been altered in any way for more than two hundred years? Of course it is all the old Baroness' fault.



Why did she send her son to Court? Because she thought, forsooth, that a Kerléonik's place must be near the King. As if the place of a good landlord ought not to be in the midst of his tenants, upon his own lands!

'The Kerléoniks ought to stay at home, and the King could get on very well without them, considering

he had to do so for twenty years—that is, from the time our late Baron died until this one was sent off to Court by his mother. However, she chose to do it, and he liked it, and chose, in his turn, to stay there. As you all know, he was not even here to close his mother's eyes, which was the duty of a gentleman and a Christian.'

'And now,' said Marianne, 'of course we shall have a new-fashioned kind of master, who will be a stranger in his own country; even during the short time he was here he seemed to think everything was very strange—our dress, our customs, even our language. Ah! we shall soon see new things and new people at Kerléonik.'

'New people!' said little Loie. 'Shall we, then, be sent away?'

'Perhaps it would be too much to say that,' replied Madame Levellec. 'The young Baron began by asking me very politely (oh, what polite ways they learn at Court!) to keep the keys and retain the management of the household; in fact, he went so far as to say that it would be impossible to find anyone to understand and to fulfil the duties as I have done. But, on the other hand, I know that a cook is coming from Versailles, and the young Baroness intends bringing her own maid with her; besides these, I have heard rumours of numerous other servants who are to come to the Castle. We shall know more to-morrow, I dare say, for Monsieur Lorhan, the steward, is to be here to see about the arrangements—the *disarrangements*, I ought to say.'

We shall hear then, how many rooms will have to be set in order.'

'How many rooms!' exclaimed Yvonne, in melancholy tones, as visions of hard work rose before her. 'Will there be so many more people in the Castle then?'

'In any case there must be more than in the old days, when the poor old Baroness lived quite alone,' answered the housekeeper, peevishly. 'To begin with, there is the Baron, then there is the Baroness, and the little Baron, who was born on St. John the Evangelist's day last year, and then there is the little Baroness, who must be ten or twelve years old, and with her, of course, comes her governess. They will all be here in less than a fortnight, and everything must be got ready for them.'

'Why are they in such a hurry to come now, when they never came during the old Baroness' life?' asked little Loie.

'They did not come then because the Baroness would not hold a Court; and they come now because the Baron wishes to know something about his estate; and, besides this, people do not go to Court when they are in deep mourning, and I dare say Madame thinks that, under these circumstances, she may as well be here as where they are. However, they know their own affairs best. All we have to do is to see that the Castle is in good order for their reception. But now, to bed! It is getting late. There will be work for all of us in the morning. The steward will arrive before the *Angelus*.'

Madame Levellec rose majestically, and gave the signal for departure. Margot took a burning brand from the hearth and lit the candles. Each of the servants followed her example, and they all went quietly and thoughtfully to bed; for somehow a feeling of sadness had come into the heart of everyone of them, which had been sent there by Madame Levellec's news—that sooner or later there would be great changes in the Castle, and that servants, fresh from Versailles and all its luxuries, would take the place of the faithful retainers of the dead Baroness.



CHAPTER II.

Good love, howe'er ill-placed,
Is better for a man's soul in the end
Than if he loved ill what deserves love well.

—*E. B. Browning.*

CHAPTER II.

SHEEP AND A SHEPHERDESS.

THERE is a pleasant spot in Brittany, not far from the old Castle of Kerléonik, which is known by the name of *Pierres Longues*, and is the favourite resort of shepherds and shepherdesses with their flocks; it does not matter how large the flocks may be, there is no fear but that there will be fodder enough for them on those open undulating slopes, where the bright green grass seems in spring-time and summer to be literally sown with golden furze and sweet wild flowers of all kinds.

The long pointed stones which gave their name (*Pierres Longues*) to this calm retreat, had been there for centuries, dating back from the old Druidical days of which the Breton lore tells such marvellous tales. Some of them still stood upright, pointing towards the sunny sky; others lay upon the ground, covered with wreaths of sweet-brier and bramble.



On one of these, a day or two after that most fatiguing day at the Castle upon which Madame Levellec had dwelt so pathetically, a young shepherdess, named Jeannette, sat with her spinning-wheel. Her crook was by her side; not that she ever needed to use it, for the sheep under her care were sensible animals, and never cared to wander far from the pleasant meads of *Pierres Longues*.

Had they been minded to do so, the dog Cyrus, who had nothing in the world to do but to watch them, would have soon put a stop to any such attempt on their part.

And as it may be wondered why, in this simple Breton country, a dog should be found bearing the name of the great Persian king, it may be as well at once to offer an explanation. The grandfather of the present Baron of Kerléonik had owned a splendid bloodhound whom he called Cyrus, and since then, for fifty years, half the farmers' dogs had rejoiced in the honour of being named after the old favourite at the Castle.

Jeannette was the youngest daughter of a farmer who lived at the Chestnut Farm, one of the dependencies of Kerléonik. She was a bright-looking girl of about fifteen, dark and thin, and, it must be confessed, somewhat untidy in appearance. Her long hair hung loosely down her back, it was only on fête days that it was drawn neatly up under her white cap with the large wings, when she also donned her bright blue and red

skirt, and the black cloth jacket turned back and adorned with velvet.

When she was with her sheep, and Cyrus for her only companion, Jeannette was attired in a coarse petticoat and a rough cape, whilst her bare feet were shod only by some large sabots lined with straw ; and, thus equipped, the girl bore cold and heat, rain and sunshine, with as much philosophy as the renowned Cyrus himself, and there she would sit as gay as a lark, singing the old songs of her country, and laughing at the echoes of her voice amid the distant rocks. She was a laughter-loving maiden ; but on this spring morning she neither laughed nor sang, her distaff had fallen to the ground and lay at her feet, her chin rested on her hand, her elbow on the stone on which she sat, and there passed over her face from time to time an expression that had in it something of mingled sadness and *ennui*. She was soon, however, roused from her dreams, whatever they may have been.

‘Halloo, Jeannette!’ cried a voice, which caused her to start from her seat ; ‘what on earth are you doing ; did you not hear me before ? I have been looking for you and calling to you for the last quarter of an hour !’

The voice came from a little heap of piled-up stones, at a distance of about ten feet from where the girl sat. A boy of some seventeen or eighteen years old was standing there, wearing the large hat and the loose vest covered with metal buttons, the usual costume of the

Breton peasants ; and his long fair hair, blown about by the wind, shone in the bright spring sunshine.

‘I did not hear you, Jean,’ answered the girl ; ‘you must have been shouting against the wind. Come here ; it is very pleasant at the foot of these great stones.’



‘Wait a minute whilst I fetch my cattle.’ And Jean proceeded to address his charges : ‘Ho ! ho ! my beauties ! This way, then—now for Red, now for Spotty, now for Black ; there you all are ; there is plenty to eat, and you will be quiet for awhile.’

Jean was soon seated by the girl’s side, whilst his cows browsed close at hand without any opposition on the part of Cyrus, who, although he was averse to strangers, evidently looked upon Red, and Spotty, and Black as old friends.

Jeannette took up her distaff and began to spin industriously, as though to make up for lost time, and Jean proceeded to take out his knife and carved spoons and plates out of some wood which he had brought with him.

‘I am very glad to see you, Jean,’ said the girl, who had recovered her usual gaiety. ‘You must have a great deal to tell me of all the grand things you have seen in your travels. Of course you went to the Chapel of Madame Sainte Anne, that they tell us about at the fêtes? Ives Nicolank found her likeness in a bush, with a light burning above it. I will sing the story to you, and you will be able to tell me if you saw anything like it. Of course you *did* go to Sainte Anne’s—it is quite near your grandfather’s village?’

‘Yes, I went there, and I have the medal with Madame Sainte Anne’s likeness, which is sold at the door of the chapel. But I really have not much to tell you. Whilst Grandfather was ill, Father and I always stayed with him, and as soon as he was well we came home. And what have you been doing here? Is the white cow sold? And have the grey hen’s eggs been hatched yet?’

‘Oh, yes; everything is all right at the farm; but, Jean, if you had but arrived yesterday morning instead of yesterday evening——’

‘Well, what then? I should have seen you a day sooner, that is all; and that would, of course, have been a pleasure to me, but I do not see any other reason.’

‘What! You do not know then, you have not heard, that the Baron has arrived?’

‘Yes ; I heard it last night. But it makes no difference to me that I can see.’

‘No difference to you !’ answered Jeannette, impatiently. Of course it does not, since you were not there ; but if you *had* been you would have seen how grand it was.’

‘What was grand, Jeannette ? You do not even tell me what you are talking about.’

‘The carriages, and the Baron, and the Baroness, and everybody. There were no rejoicings on their return, because of the old Baroness’ death ; but I had to take some cream to the Castle, and, when I heard that they were coming, I hid behind a hedge to see them pass. If you only knew how beautiful the carriages were ! The old Baroness’ were nothing to them. And then the servants ! Footmen with powdered hair and three-cornered hats ; and then came some beautiful young ladies, dressed in blue, and yellow, and green, with lovely little white aprons trimmed with lace, and caps all lace and ribbons ; and their skin was so white, and their hands so pretty ! They might have been queens, or, at least, cousins of the Baron’s ; but they were nothing of the kind : the beautiful young ladies were only Madame’s *soubrettes*. After them came a still grander carriage, and in that sat the Baron and Baroness, and some other ladies whom I could not see.’

‘What kind of animals are *soubrettes* ?’ asked Jean, sulkily. Evidently the splendours with which Jeannette was entertaining him did not meet with his approbation.

‘The servants who wait upon the ladies who go to the Court are called *soubrettes*,’ answered Jeannette, with an air of mingled superiority and pique. ‘You certainly do not know much, Jean!’

‘And you know a great deal too much, Jeannette. These people had much better have stayed where they were. During the fifteen years he has been with the King, the Baron has forgotten all the old Brittany customs. As he has adopted those of the Court, let him keep them to himself; he should not bring them here. Good-bye! The sun is high in the heavens, and I have a long way to walk before I can get my dinner.’

‘*Au revoir*, Jean!’ said Jeannette; but she spoke so low that he did not hear the words, and the lad turned on his heel, and called to his cows, and soon was far away; whilst the girl, with a sullen look upon her young face, resumed her spinning. For some reason or other she did not sing at all through that long spring day.



CHAPTER III.

It befell in that pleasant summer time.

—*Kingsley.*

CHAPTER III.

THE END OF A COUNTRY WALK.

MADEMOISELLE Carmeline de la Roche Haubert was the last descendant of a race of Paladins who in the Crusades and in the wars of France had fought bravely for their King and their country. But, somehow or other, they lost all their money, and Mademoiselle Carmeline, alone in the world and penniless, would have had to seek a convent cell as her asylum, had not the young Baroness of Kerléonik asked her to take charge of the education of her little daughter. The offer was gratefully accepted; Mademoiselle had no vocation for the religious life, and she was very fond of children.

She was a good, honest, true-hearted woman, with a tinge of romance in her composition; which, perhaps, when it is coupled with discretion, is not a bad attribute in those who have to deal with children.

She was perfectly charmed when she heard that the time of mourning for the old Baroness was to be spent at Kerléonik. No more Court etiquette, no more assemblies, no stupid walks along terraces or

through noisy streets; and in place of all this, fields, shepherds, shepherdesses, and sheep; and then the supreme felicity of reading some idyll, sitting under the shade of a spreading oak!

She was great at heraldry and genealogy, and had instructed her pupil in both these sciences, but she left all the books upon the subjects in Paris, and filled a box with all the pastorals she could find, written in every language she could in the faintest degree understand.

Little Adelaide de Kerléonik was as delighted as her governess at the thought of a country life. She was a well-trained little damsel, fully alive to all the dignities of her position as the daughter of a great nobleman, but she was very tired of those stiff conventional walks; and as to those assemblies of her mother's, to which she was brought down for an hour or so, that she might learn good manners, she did nothing but yawn behind her little fan all the time she sat in a corner, trying to notice how the grand-looking ladies bowed and curtseyed.

How delightful it would be to be in the country, to see the peasants, and the farms, and the cottages, and to drink a glass of new milk from a red cow, to be handed her by a shepherdess in a flowered petticoat and a hat streaming with ribbons, leading her favourite lamb by a silken string!

Then, perhaps, in the distance would be heard the piping of some shepherd, and she and Mademoiselle would come upon him suddenly, and he would modestly

offer them a nest of little doves, which would be lying in his straw hat, and which he had just taken from the top of an oak, without in the least soiling his light green satin garments.

Adelaide, the town-bred child, gleaned her ideas of country life, shepherds and shepherdesses, from Mademoiselle's favourite idylls, and from pictures, and, above all, from her last new doll—her beautiful Chloris—who was dressed as a shepherdess. How charming it would be to verify the details of the waxen lady's costume by seeing the dresses of the real shepherdesses!



It was the morning after the arrival of the family at Kerléonik that the governess and her pupil started for their first walk in the neighbourhood of the Castle. Oh, how the child enjoyed it! She ran hither and thither, carolling blithely, and, for the first time in her little life of twelve years, picked the sweet violets and primroses, which grew in wild profusion in every direction in which the delighted pair walked.

Sometimes a rabbit crossed their path; sometimes a squirrel, perched upon a tree, sprang suddenly to the ground, and rushed past them like a flash of lightning, his eyes so mischievously bright, his tail so long and bushy.

Mademoiselle smiled contentedly as she saw all this, and quoted verses from her pastorals; and Adelaide

laughed aloud in childish glee : it was all so new and so charming.

True, she had not yet come across any snow-white sheep, nor seen a shepherdess in the least like Chloris ; but there were so many other things to look at, that she had not even time to think about their absence.

Our friend Jeannette, sitting in her usual place on the stone, saw the little lady and her governess slowly wending their way to where she sat ; she gazed upon them as though they were apparitions, which the faintest breath of air would cause to disappear.

She watched Adelaide, who sprang about as lightly as any fairy between the tufts of furze and the black-berry bushes ; and her admiration rose to its height as she saw her balance herself upon tip-toe, so that she might reach a golden spray of broom, which hung temptingly above her head.

Then Adelaide advanced a little nearer to the shepherdess, and Jeannette saw her stoop to pick a gilliflower which was growing between two stones.



But she did not touch it. All of a sudden she became as pale as death, and a cry of terror rang through the sweet spring air.

The next minute the poor child fell to the ground, motionless and unconscious.

CHAPTER IV.

Presence of mind, and courage in distress,
Are more than armies to procure success.

—*Dryden.*

CHAPTER IV.

WHAT A SABOT DID.

JEANNETTE flew to the rescue in an instant; but she did not attempt to raise the child, seeing there was something more important to be done first.

A venomous snake, which lay basking in the sunshine at the foot of the gilliflower, had been disturbed from his mid-day slumber by Adelaide's intrusion, and was preparing to make a dart upon the enemy.

Jeannette was courageous, and the sight of a snake did not frighten her; she struck the creature a fierce blow with her distaff, which made it fall back, and, without giving it time to prepare for another attack, she took off her sabot and struck it on the head. She repeated the blows several times, for she knew that snakes take a deal of killing; and whilst she was thus engaged, Mademoiselle arrived upon the scene, pale and agitated, for she had heard her pupil's cry and had made all possible haste to get to her, but her long dress kept catching in the brambles and considerably retarded her progress. She saw the dead snake, and Jeannette standing with uplifted hand above it; she

saw Adelaide lying senseless on the ground, and all she could do was to throw herself on her knees beside the child, and cry :

‘Oh, my darling! my darling! has the snake killed you?’

‘Oh, no!’ answered Jeannette, cheerfully; ‘it had no time to bite her.’

Somewhat reassured, Mademoiselle proceeded to take her pupil in her arms, and to bathe her face with some scent, which she always carried about with her, and in a very short time Adelaide opened her eyes, and, remembering the cause of her alarm, looked round anxiously to see if the snake was still there.

Jeannette understood the meaning of that look, and she took up the reptile by the end of its tail and presented it to the child. Adelaide drew back timidly.

‘Do not be afraid, Mademoiselle,’ said Jeannette; ‘it is dead!’

‘Oh, the horrible beast! I saw his head and his wicked eyes, and his open mouth, and I thought I was dead. Did you kill him?’

‘Yes, with my sabot, Mademoiselle,’ answered the shepherdess, making a very low curtsy, and still holding the snake in her hand. ‘They are dangerous creatures, are these snakes; if they bite you, you may die. You must not walk in the sun in these dry places without looking to see where you are going, for if you tread upon one of them it puts him into a passion, and then——’

Jeannette did not finish the sentence, probably think-



ing she had made it clear enough, and beginning, now that the excitement was over, to stand a little in awe of the Baron's daughter and the grand lady who owned such a lovely smelling-bottle.

'Then *you* saved my life?' said Adelaide, after a pause.

'Certainly,' answered Mademoiselle; 'and the Baron and Baroness will not fail to reward her for her courage. What is your name, my little one?'

'Jeannette, at your service,' (with a still deeper curtsy). I am the daughter of Pierre Gouarhé, the farmer at Chestnut Farm, which belongs to the Baron.'

'Oh, I am very glad!' said Adelaide. 'What were you doing when you saw me? Are you not afraid of snakes?'

'Oh, no: I have my sabot, and of course I have to come here very often with my sheep.'

'You have sheep?' cried Adelaide, excitedly. 'She has sheep, Mademoiselle—have you seen them?'

'No, my child, I have been too much occupied with you. Are you well enough to walk? We must be thinking of returning to the Castle. We shall see the sheep another time.'

'The sheep are quite at your service, my ladies, and the shepherdess also,' answered Jeannette, with a third and still lower curtsy. She could not understand why these grand people should be so anxious to see the sheep, but she hoped they would come back again before very long.

Meanwhile Adelaide was looking for the shepherdess, who, naturally, would be with her sheep.

‘Where is the shepherdess?’ she asked.

‘I am the shepherdess, Mademoiselle, and I can show you the sheep in one instant. Hi! Cyrus! bring the animals, my good dog.’

Cyrus, who was reposing calmly beneath the shade of the trees, jumped up at once, and displayed his shaggy person to the little lady.

She was rather afraid at first, thinking that some wild beast stood before her, but when she saw Jeannette pat the rough head she was reassured.

Cyrus sprang forward at full gallop, and the next minute a tumultuous flock of sheep, came running,



jumping, and tumbling against each other, towards the shepherdess.

‘There they are!’ said Jeannette, proudly; ‘and the Baron has not finer sheep than ours, on any one of his farms. You see they are well taken care of.’

Adelaide gazed, Mademoiselle Carmeline gazed — and neither of them believed their eyes.

Was it possible that sheep were not white? That they were not adorned with coloured ribbons and garlands of roses? Could these be sheep? Could that be a shepherdess?

Mademoiselle Carmeline was struck dumb with astonishment. Adelaide was the first to speak.

‘I thought sheep were white,’ she said to Jeannette.

‘Some are white and some are black; these are the white ones; their skins are beautiful. They will be shorn next month, when there is no further danger of frost.’

‘Ah!’ said Adelaide, who failed to see any beauty in the flock before her. ‘And where is your lamb?’

‘There are a great many lambs there with their mothers. There is one! Look at it, my little lady.’

Adelaide’s face brightened. The lamb was not very white, certainly, but it was much whiter and cleaner than any of its companions; and it was such a pretty, graceful little thing, with its trembling limbs, and its little red nose, and its innocent eyes. Adelaide made up her mind to bring it a blue collar as soon as she possibly could.

Cyrus also soon found favour in Adelaide’s sight; she listened to Jeannette whilst she sang the dog’s praises, and even ventured to pat his rough head with her little white hand, as a reward for his having, only a few days previously, strangled a wolf, who attacked one of the sheep.

Mademoiselle Carmeline again insisted that it was quite time to return to the Castle; but she confessed that she had not the most remote notion of how to get there; and Jeannette hardly dared leave her sheep, even in the faithful Cyrus' keeping, whilst she went with the ladies at least part of the way home.

At this critical juncture Jean appeared upon the scene; and Jeannette, with many injunctions to him to be a faithful guide, and to take the very shortest way to the Castle, entrusted her new friends to his care, with an air of supreme importance.

Adelaide's last words were:—

‘I shall come and see you soon at the Chestnut Farm.’

On the way home she tried to enter into conversation with Jean, but he was not as sociable as Jeannette; and after he had said, in answer to the little lady's numerous questions, that his name was Jean, that he knew Jeannette very well, and that he kept his father's flock when he was not working in the fields, nothing more was to be got out of him.

But he had said enough to set Adelaide thinking profoundly. He was a shepherd, whilst Jeannette was a shepherdess—and oh, how different both of them were to what shepherds and shepherdesses ought to be! The girl had saved her life, however, and, out of gratitude for that, she would do something for her and for this boy.

She had often heard gentlemen in her father's house talking about improving the condition of the peasants.

Here was a chance for her. She would improve the condition of this poor shepherd and shepherdess. She would begin at once—there was no time to lose; and, thus resolving, she found herself standing before the Castle gate.

CHAPTER V.

Honour, my lord, is much too proud to catch
At every slender twig of nice distinction,—
These, for th' unfeeling vulgar may do well ;
But those whose souls are by the nicer rule
Of virtuous delicacy only sway'd,
Stand at another bar than that of laws.

—*Thomson.*

O Jealousy,
Love's eclipse ; thou art, in thy disease,
A wild, mad patient—wondrous hard to please.

—*Davenport.*

CHAPTER V.

AT THE CHESTNUT FARM.

THE Baroness, although she did not love the country or country life, dearly loved her little girl; and when she heard the story of the snake and of Jeannette's bravery, she insisted that Mademoiselle and her pupil should go to the Chestnut Farm directly after their early dinner, and the shepherdess was to be invited to the Castle the very next day, so that both the Baron and his lady might thank her personally for having saved their child's life.

Adelaide was quite ready for another walk, but Mademoiselle Carmeline was not quite so eager for another expedition on foot. The morning's fatigue and excitement had quite knocked her up; so two sedan chairs were ordered to be brought to the door; for old Hervé, the coachman, declared it was impossible that any carriage could approach the Chestnut Farm.

The cavalcade started, Loie acting as guide to the Parisian servants. Adelaide did not at all enjoy this mode of conveyance. She put her pretty head out of the door continually, looking first to the right and then

to the left, determined to see all that was to be seen, and puzzling poor Loie considerably by the strange questions she asked; in fact, he would have been very much astonished at his young mistress's ignorance, had not his respect for the family forbidden the indulgence of such a sentiment. He was delighted to be able to tell her the names of the different flowers they passed on their way. She did not even know a cabbage or a turnip top when she saw it; and when she was told that a field, covered with beautiful, thick grass, was really a cornfield, she laughed incredulously.

The Chestnut Farm took its name from a group of beautiful chestnut trees which stood in a neighbouring field, and the fruit of which furnished the farmer's family with the best part of their winter food. 'There is the farm, Mademoiselle!' said Loie.

Adelaide saw before her, at the end of a kind of yard, all strewn with brambles and ankle-deep in mud, a range of low buildings with thatched roofs, which were level with the door-tops.

From the centre roof smoke was ascending, showing that human beings inhabited these extraordinary-looking dwellings. Grunting sounds from the left-hand cabin, assuredly indicated the neighbourhood of pigs, while the bleating of sheep from the right hand, and sonorous and prolonged bellowing at the back, proclaimed the proximity of horned cattle. Fowls innumerable cackled in front of the cabins (for each separate building was nothing more than a cabin), picking up all they could



out of the mud. Cyrus lay on the threshold of the farmhouse, enjoying the rest and the sunshine, knowing, faithful fellow that he was, that all his flock were safe in the sheep-house. The Parisian servants stopped at the entrance of the yard.

‘Ah, you must go on!’ said Loie, triumphantly.

He had taken the precaution of putting on his sabots, and he rather enjoyed the thought of seeing these smart gentlemen wade through the mud in their grand shoes with silver buckles.

‘There is no other way to the house,’ continued the boy; and as there was no help for it, the men went on as best they could, not daring to grumble, but wondering what strange freak could have induced the Baroness to send her little daughter to such a place.

Cyrus, disturbed in his nap by the unwonted invasion, started up and began to bark violently, but he soon recognised his new friends, and walked up to Adelaide, wagging his tail, and putting down his shaggy head, evidently expecting to be caressed. Jeannette, who was recounting the morning’s adventure to her family, hearing Cyrus bark, rushed out of the house, followed by all the other inmates.



Jeannette, for the first time in her life, seemed to understand the use of a broom. She seized one which lay upon the ground, and began to

sweep away the mud which lay before the door, and make a clean space where Mademoiselle and Adelaide could alight.

Meanwhile, the other members of Pierre Gouarhé's family were loud in their expressions of delight and gratitude for the honour done them.

A minute more, and Adelaide and her governess stood in the interior of the dwelling.

No traveller in distant lands could have been more astonished at the sight of a Lapland hut or an Indian



wigwam than they were at their first introduction into the Breton farmer's home.

They understood that they were in a Christian country, however, for over the high chimney hung an iron crucifix and a picture of Madame Sainte Anne, the patron saint of Brittany.

The floor was of earth, uneven in some places, while

some wooden benches and a wooden table formed the sole furniture of the room, if we except the shutting-up bedsteads, looking something like cupboards, which were half open, and showed the mattresses piled up upon each. For the rest, the inhabitants of this strange dwelling seemed in keeping with their surroundings. The men were in the style of Jean, the women in that of Jeannette, without her charm of youthfulness.

Little by little governess and pupil took in all these details; for the transition from the brilliant sunshine out of doors to the dark room, lit only by the tiniest of windows, was somewhat startling.

Adelaide, with her new theories for improving the condition of the peasantry, felt inclined to cry; she was really a tender-hearted little maiden, and it made her very sorrowful to think that the brave girl who had saved her life should be condemned to live in such a place.

She had made up a pretty little speech at her mother's dictation, but at the sight of what she deemed such misery, all power of expression deserted her, and it was Mademoiselle Carmeline who invited Jeannette, in the Baroness' name, to come to the Castle the next day. Pierre Gouarhé and his wife could hardly believe their ears. Was it possible that such an honour could be intended for a daughter of theirs? And what for? Simply for having killed a snake with her sabot! That was really nothing. The Baron and Baroness were too good, they said, but Jeannette should certainly obey their

commands ; only, the good folks entreated that her rough manners might be excused, as she had never, in all her life, until that morning, spoken to any one but the village people. Adelaide found words now to say that, of course, it would be all right—her father and mother greatly wished to thank the girl for what she had done ; and then she asked if she might go out into the yard and see all the animals, whose grunting, bleating, and bellowing were still distinctly heard.

Once out of doors with Jeannette, her spirits rose. She had brought a little blue collar with her for the lamb she had seen in the morning, and she fastened it round the gentle creature's neck ; then she saw a cow milked, and drank a glass of the delicious frothy milk ; she fed the fowls, and admired the little chickens, and visited the duck-pond ; and came to the satisfactory conclusion that it was all better—ever so much better—than the walks at



Versailles or in the Paris Gardens.

The farmer's wife appeared at last, to ask if Mademoiselle would take something to eat.

Adelaide was feeling just a little hungry, and willingly returned to the farm.

Agathe Gouarhé had done her best for the entertainment of her visitors : she had spread a table with snowy cloth under the apple trees, which were in full

blossom ; she had brought out her best china plates, and she had fried some pancakes, which she served up with the most delicious cream.

The bread was considered by the good woman as quite new—it was just a week old and extremely dark. Neither Made-moiselle nor Adelaide, with all the good will in the world, could eat it ; so they fell back entirely upon the pancakes, and declared they had never in all their lives eaten anything to equal them.



The meal was over at last ; the chairs were waiting at the door.

‘Be sure you come early to-morrow,’ were Adelaide’s last words to Jeannette.

The visitors had just got out of sight, when from the opposite direction arrived another acquaintance—none other than our poor friend Jean.

Of course he was told of the great honour that had come to the farm, and of the still greater honour that was in store for Jeannette the next day.

Jean shrugged his shoulders, and taking up his stick, which he had put into the corner, evidently with the intention of paying his friends a long visit, he said :

“You have lost all pride, all of you, to go and throw Jeannette into the very jaws of the wolf ! She is already half-mad, just because she saw the Baron’s carriages

pass along the road. What will it be, I wonder, when she has spent a day at the Castle with all these fine Paris servants, with their smart dresses, and their powdered hair? She will no longer be Jeannette; she will be one of those animals they call a *soubrette* !'

And Jean put his large hat upon his head, and walked away with rapid strides.

CHAPTER VI.

Ambition is, at distance,
A goodly prospect—tempting to the view :
The height delights us, and the mountain-top
Looks beautiful, because 'tis nigh to Heaven,
But we ne'er know how sandy's the foundation,
What storms will batter, and what tempests shake it.

—*Otway.*

Mischief that may be helped is hard to know.

—*Lord Brooke.*

CHAPTER VI.

AT THE CASTLE.

THE inmates of the farm took very different views of Jean's extraordinary behaviour. Jeannette did not trouble herself about it; she was too busy washing her cap, and getting all her other finery ready for the morrow's visit.

Agathe Gouarhé set the lad down as an ill-tempered churl, incapable of understanding the great honour that had come to Jeannette; her husband, who was not as ambitious as herself, said nothing about it; but down in his secret heart was a fear that perhaps some harm might come of this taking of his girl out of her place.

The one person in the house who shared Jean's fears was the farm-servant Gothon. She had lived with the Gouarhés ever since she was quite a little girl; she was there when Jeannette was born, she had tended her as an infant, she had looked after her when she was a toddling child, and she loved her as well as any mother could love her daughter.

She knew that it had long ago been arranged by Pierre Gouarhé and Jean's father, that when the boy

and girl were old enough, and with the Baron's consent (that, of course, was always necessary), Jean and Jeannette were to be man and wife; she knew that the lad was honest and brave, and God-fearing, and she could desire no happier lot in life for the girl she loved so well than to see her cared for by him.

Kerentré, his father's farm, was very near the Chestnuts, and Jeannette, in going to live there, would still be within a few minutes' distance of her old home.

And if she went constantly to the Castle into the midst of all the grandeur there, what might not be the end of all these cherished hopes?

The faithful Gothon hardly liked to face the probabilities of such a catastrophe. She helped, however, to dress the girl the next morning, polishing up her sabots until they shone like a mirror; then she watched her make her way across the fields, and she asked the good God to take care of the little one.

Jeannette, on her arrival at the Castle, was instantly ushered by the smart footmen into the presence of the Baron and Baroness.

The little heir of the Kerléoniks was taking his first walk under the care of his nurse, whilst his father and mother were admiring the performance; Mademoiselle Carmeline and Adelaide were also absorbed in the little boy's feats, but at the sight of Jeannette standing in the doorway, they both went forward to meet her; whilst she, reassured by the sight of the friendly faces, made her very best curtsy, and, advancing timidly into the

room, knelt down and kissed the Baroness' hand, a proceeding which her mother and Gothon had pronounced to be the correct one.

The Baroness smiled.

'You are the slayer of serpents, my little one; is it not so? I would thank you for what you did for my child; and pray tell your father and mother that they must not trouble themselves about your future; we will provide for that.'

'And tell your father,' said the Baron, 'that if he wants anything done in connexion with the farm, he has but to speak to the steward. I will give him orders to grant whatever in reason may be asked for.'

'You must go with my daughter now,' added the Baroness, 'and she will show you over the Castle, and amuse you as best she can.'

Jeannette, covered with blushes, and feeling as happy as a queen, curtsied her thanks, and followed Adelaide out of the room; but before she reached the door her sharp ears had caught the Baron's remarks.

'Charming, really! such pretty eyes, and so graceful. These Bretonne peasants are far nicer than the dressed-up dolls one sees in Paris.'

Jeannette heard no more, but a feeling of mingled pride and astonishment came into her heart. Surely, the Baron could not be speaking of *her*, and yet there was no other Bretonne peasant at hand. What could it all mean?

Adelaide, however, did not allow her much time for

thought. She seized her hand, and dragged her along the soft carpeted floors, until, at last, the shepherdess



came to a stand-still, and positively could not move for a time.

What was it that so stupefied her? Facing her was a girl—the very counterpart of herself—dressed exactly like herself, even to the polished sabots.

She cried, in a frightened tone, ‘Who is that?’

Adelaide burst into a merry peal of laughter.

‘Why, it is you. Do you not know yourself? Have you never before seen a looking-glass?’

‘A looking-glass?’ repeated Jeannette, stupidly; and Mademoiselle Carmeline came to the rescue.

‘You know, Adelaide,’ she said, ‘that we saw no looking-glasses at the farm. The child has never seen herself reflected before, except in the brooks and streams.’

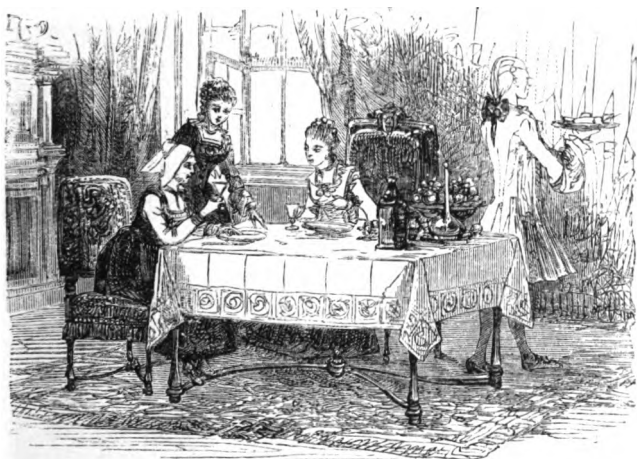
Jeannette understood all now; she had seen herself reflected in the streams more than once, but that was in her shepherdess’ dress, when she went out with her flock. Never before had she beheld herself attired in all the grandeur of her fête-day costume, and she looked wonderingly into the mirror, and then said, ‘Is it really me?’

‘Yes, it is really you; but surely you have looked at yourself long enough? Come along; I have a great

many things to show you. I will give you a little looking-glass before you go home.'

Off went the little lady and the young peasant, into the armoury, into the picture gallery, into the chapel; lastly, into Adelaide's own room, where poor Jeannette's bewilderment at all she saw reached its height. Then came the luncheon; the table covered with plate, and flowers and exquisite glass; the powdered footmen standing in respectful silence behind Mademoiselle's and Adelaide's chairs; and the food? Well, it is of no use attempting to describe the food; it would only make our mouths water to do so.

Jeannette could not enjoy it; it was so unlike anything



she had ever tasted; and, besides this, a fear had come upon her that she was in a dream, just like one of those

people of whom she had been told such marvellous tales, as she sat with her parents round the log-fires on winter evenings; people who saw all kinds of wonderful sights, and were transported into fairyland, and just when their enjoyment was at its height, found themselves all alone in the middle of the night in some dreadfully lonely place.

Jeannette feared that she might awake and find herself in the darkness, in the midst of the rocks and brambles of *Pierres Longues*.

‘Now, then,’ said Adelaide, when the repast was over, ‘come and see my toys.’

Jeannette gazed and wondered, not understanding what half the costly playthings were intended for; but the crowning point of the whole day’s enjoyment was when Chloris, in her lovely finery, was presented to her notice.

The girl had seen dolls in her infancy; she had even possessed one or two: they were made of rags, notwithstanding which she had loved them dearly; but this delightful creature, which appeared to be alive, was it really only a doll? Was it not rather one of those sweet fairies who inhabit certain parts of the earth, and live in palaces made of gold and precious stones?

Jeannette dared not touch Chloris.

‘It is my last new doll,’ said Adelaide; ‘you see she is dressed as a shepherdess; here is her white lamb.’

‘As a shepherdess? Oh, mademoiselle, shepherdesses are not dressed like that!’

‘Yes, they are—in books; I have seen pictures of them very often, exactly like Chloris—Chloris is my doll’s name—it is the name of a great many shepherdesses.’

Jeannette looked doubtful, but she thought within herself that Chloris was a very beautiful name; and she listened attentively to numberless stories which Adelaide told her of shepherds and shepherdesses, whilst she was dressing and undressing Chloris, and trying to initiate the simple peasant maiden into the mysteries of the young lady’s toilette.

At last the Baroness came into the room, saying that she thought Jeannette ought to be going home. Adelaide drew her mother aside, and a whispered conversation was held between them.

The child seemed to be pleading earnestly for some favour to be granted her, and at last the Baroness said, ‘Well, you may do as you like.’

Then Adelaide sprang forward joyously, and went up to Jeannette, who was standing with her eyes fixed upon Chloris.

‘There,’ she said, ‘take her. I wanted to give you something that you would like to take home with you; I give you Chloris—for always—you understand?’

But Jeannette did *not* understand; she could not believe that such good fortune was really hers, and the Baroness was obliged to confirm her little girl’s words. Chloris, therefore, was packed up in the box which con-

tained her different changes of attire, and Jeannette carried away her treasure.

And thus it was that a shepherdess, in full Watteau costume, was introduced into the Chestnut Farm.

CHAPTER VII.

Oh ! wisest of the wise is he
Who first within his spirit knew,
And with his tongue declared it true,
That love comes best that comes unto
The equal of degree !

—*F. B. Browning.*

CHAPTER VII.

CHLORIS AT THE FARM.

THE spring day was drawing to a close, and the farmer, his sons, and his son-in-law, with Thomas the servant, had returned home at the sound of the angelus, and were sitting down, after their day's work, to partake of the meal which the women had prepared for them, when Jeannette, carrying Chloris with more respect than a Hindoo ever entertained for his fetich, reached the farm.

Of course they were talking about her and of her visit to the Castle, and wondering when she would come home; and upon her appearance a circle was instantly formed round her, and she was beset with questions of all kinds. Even the men allowed their soup to get cold, that they might listen to her account of her doings, as, with cheeks flushed by excitement and eyes bright with pleasure, Jeannette told her tale.

Some of the men and women had, of course, been into the kitchen of the Castle, but not one of them had ever entered the splendid reception-rooms or caught even a distant glimpse of the long galleries; so they heard of

all the grandeur, sitting open-mouthed and eager, and perhaps feeling a little envious that Jeannette, the youngest of them all, should have been privileged to enter the charmed walls, which were closed against themselves.

Then she gave the Baron's message to her father, and told her mother that her future was to be the Baroness' care; and forthwith Agathe Gouarhé had a vision of a day, not very far distant, when Jean and Jeannette should stand before the altar of the village church, and when the Baron should bestow upon Jean and his heirs the farm of Kerentré in perpetuity.

The story of having seen herself in the mirror was told by Jeannette with great success, but all her powers of eloquence were concentrated upon the description of Chloris.

She minutely described her features, her figure, her dress; and the women said, in chorus, with profound sighs, 'Oh, if we could but see her!'

'Ah, but you *can* see her; you will be able to see her every day, for Mademoiselle has given her to me!'

And Jeannette placed the precious box upon the table, and displayed the dazzling Chloris to the bewildered gaze of the lookers-on. Never before had such a brilliant creature been seen in that Breton kitchen! She was examined from head to foot, her clothes were displayed, the use of each garment proudly explained by Jeannette, and she was passed from one to the other amidst mingled laughter and wonder, and touched as though they



all feared such beauty must soon vanish from their sight.

They believed every word that Jeannette said; but there *are* limits to credulity, and that limit was reached when the girl announced that the costume was that of a shepherdess. It was difficult enough to believe that she was called Chloris. They had none of them ever heard of such a saint, but perhaps there may have been one of that name in the country where the Court was situated, so they would let that pass and not cavil at it; but that there could be any country in the whole world where shepherdesses were dressed in *that* fashion was more than anyone could be expected to believe who knew anything about sheep.

Jeannette remained firm in her belief; the ladies at the Castle had told her that Chloris was attired as a shepherdess, and of course they knew.

She took the doll to bed with her that night, and she woke up many times to see that her treasure was safe.

The next day was Sunday, and the simple Breton folk always assembled after morning service in the little square, which was planted with elms, to discuss the news of the week.

Of course the great subject of discussion on that particular Sunday was the arrival of the new Baron, and second only in importance to this was Jeannette Gouarhé's visit to the Castle.

How had she got there—or, rather, why had she been asked there? Why, on that very morning, on their

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way into Church, the Baron and Baroness had smiled kindly upon the girl, whilst their little daughter had nodded in the most friendly manner, and said, 'How do you do, Jeannette?' What had she done to deserve all this?

The only way to find out was to ask her, so she was questioned, and Jeannette told her tale from beginning to end, winding up with the story of Chloris, and painting the beauty of that young person in such glowing colours that every one's curiosity was excited. And Jeannette graciously said that they could come and see her if they chose; so Chloris, in her new home, held a levee on that spring Sunday.

One of the villagers, however, did not avail himself of the young shepherdess' permission to visit her newly-acquired possession; and that one was young Jean Penvraz. His father and mother went to the Gouarhé's farm to wonder and to admire, but Jean, who generally spent most of his Sundays with Jeannette, was nowhere to be seen.

Gothon, going out in the evening to feed her cows, saw the lad hiding behind a bush of blossoming thorn. She did not notice him then, but returning she took a side path, and went up to him.

'What is the matter, Jean?' she said. 'Why are you hiding here, instead of coming into the house and enjoying yourself with the others? You do not seem pleased that our Jeannette has proved herself a brave girl, and has saved our master's daughter from what might have been her death.'

'I am very glad that Jeannette is brave and courageous,' answered Jean; 'but I don't see that her having saved the life of the Baron's daughter makes it one bit better than if she had saved the life of the tailor's or the tinker's child; and I cannot be glad that she is made so vain and so disagreeable, because she has been to the Castle once. She is already hankering after all the grandeur she saw there, and she does not care for us any more.'

Gothon protested against this, but Jean stopped her good-natured defence of Jeannette.

'I tell you she does not care one bit about us. She hardly looked at me the other evening, and this morning



in Church she was so anxious to get a look from the great people, and to curtsy to them, that she had not one glance to bestow upon me. Do you think I can be glad

of this? You know all about it, Gothon; you know how, when she was a tiny baby and I was a little boy of three years old, we were taken to Church, and the priest blessed us both; you know how our fathers gave us to each other, and our mothers said to me, "Take care of her—she will be your wife when you are old enough to marry." I have always loved her. I used to leave my sports to rock her cradle; I taught her to walk; I have always given her the best I had to give. Since she has been old enough to work, I have taken more care of her cattle than of my own; I have done as much hard work for her as I could. I have tried to make her understand that I loved her, and that she should lead a happy and an easy life when she came to Kerentré. And now all this is lost sight of because of a few flattering words spoken to her at the Castle. Jeannette will not be a good woman. Ah! who knows? Perhaps now she will refuse to be my wife!'

At the bare possibility of such a misfortune, poor Jean's speech was lost in long, loud sobs.

'Nonsense, Jean,' answered Gothon, stroking the lad's fair hair, as though he were still a little child; 'you don't mean what you say; all this is mere folly. Jeannette not a good woman! Jeannette not willing to be your wife, because she has been to the Castle, and our young lady has made her a present of her doll! Come with me to the farm, instead of staying here all alone indulging in your gloomy fancies. Your father and mother are there, and they are just going to sit down to supper. I

am sure Jeannette is troubled at not having seen you all day long.'

Jean yielded. When they reached the farm all the visitors had taken their departure, and Jeannette ran up to him, and said, 'I am so glad to see you, Jean; I was longing for you to come.'

Jean's bad temper vanished in an instant, and he was so bright and pleasant, that Jeannette ventured to introduce Chloris to him; but for some reason, which she could not account for, she did not tell him that the doll represented a shepherdess—she allowed him to believe that its costume was similar to that of the ladies at the Castle.



CHAPTER VIII.

There's discontent from sceptre to the swain,
And from the peasant to the king again.

—*Dryden.*

CHAPTER VIII.

CHLORIS BEGINS TO DO MISCHIEF.

NO one can live in this world without diffusing some influence around him or her, either of good or of evil. Chloris, although only a doll, was to prove no exception to this common law.

She was the only idle member of the Gouarhé family ; she did nothing, whilst all the others worked from morning till night—a bad example, assuredly, not perhaps influencing any of the family but Jeannette, who had never before played with anything better than a rag-doll, and who now made a companion and an idol of her waxen beauty.

She neglected all else for it ; and, if Cyrus had not been the good dog he was, her sheep would many and many a time have strayed away whilst she was engrossed in the mysteries of Chloris' toilette.

By the way, the name of Chloris had been gradually dropped ; it was too uncommon a name for the villagers to remember, and Jeannette's doll was unanimously accorded the title of 'Mademoiselle.'

The natural instinct of our nature is to try and be as

much like any one we love as possible, and so Jeannette wished to resemble her beloved 'Mademoiselle.'

She began by washing her hands and face, which was rather a good move than otherwise,—she wished her own complexion to become as white as the doll's.

Of course she did not succeed. Her face was cleaner, which was a decided improvement, but it was a very brown face still. Then she thought that perhaps it was the effect of the sun that caused her complexion to be so different from, not only that of Chloris, but of the ladies, and even of the *soubrettes* at the Castle. And then she suddenly remembered that they carried parasols over their heads. Of course she could not buy a parasol—she sighed at the thought, and then wondered whether a large cabbage-leaf might not be some protection from the sun's rays! So she sat in the fields with a cabbage-leaf on her hat, only she was always very careful to take it off when she saw Jean in the distance; then also she would take up her distaff and begin to spin, so that the lad might not see that instead of working, as she used to do, she spent most of her time dressing and undressing 'Mademoiselle.'

Another thing she was very careful to hide was the little looking-glass, which Adelaide, true to her promise, had given her. When she knew that Jean was far away, she used to fasten it against the trunk of a tree, and, standing before it, she would try to arrange her hair in the same way as Chloris' was arranged.

She had no ribbons to put into it, so she picked the

largest and gaudiest flowers she could find, the larger the better, and then, turning from one side to the other, the poor child would contemplate her grotesque appearance in the little mirror, with infinite satisfaction.

In the afternoons, when Cyrus thought it was time to go home, he used to rub his black nose against Jeannette's arm, and then she would jump up, conscious that the day she had wasted was drawing to a close, and, tearing the decorations out of her hair, and letting it wave in tangled tresses over her shoulders, she would make her way home with a heavy heart; for, vain and foolish though she was, our poor little Jeannette had a conscience.

Then, when she had disposed of her sheep, she would go into the house and help in the household work; but she was no longer the merry, chattering Jeannette of old. She was a grave and somewhat sullen maiden now, with a very heavy heart. She could not understand herself, and she would not tell her troubles to anyone; she never talked to anyone but Chloris, and, although the doll was certainly a good listener, she was not, as you may imagine, particularly sympathetic.



All this time guests were coming and going to and from the Castle; and Adelaide, although she often thought of Jeannette and her farm, and her ducks and fowls, and her pancakes, was not able to see anything more of the poor little

shepherdess upon whose young life, all unconsciously, her influence had cast so heavy a shadow.

But, after a time, the family at the Castle were once more left to themselves; and one warm summer's day, when the Baroness lay upon the sofa looking at the gambols of her little boy and her dog, and when Mademoiselle Carmeline, also affected by the heat, declined to go for a long walk with her pupil, Adelaide, feeling somewhat weary and lonely, asked for and obtained permission to send a messenger to fetch Jeannette to the Castle.

And, of course, Jeannette was only too glad to obey the summons. She went on that day, and on many days besides, and she was always a welcome visitor.

There had come a reaction throughout the Castle household after all the recent excitement. The Parisian cook felt that his occupation was gone and his energies wasted. Lisette and Marton, the two *soubrettes*, made no secret of their dissatisfaction at the dulness of the Castle and their longings to return to Paris; and when they had amused themselves by teasing the footmen, and had excited the fury of Margot, and Marianne, and old Hervé, by laughing at the good Breton folk, their dress, and their manners, they were rather glad to turn to Jeannette, who, they condescendingly observed, was 'not half bad for a peasant;' and they instructed her in the etiquette of *soubrette* life, and told her how she was to behave in the servants' hall; and it was really wonderful what an apt scholar the child proved, and how quickly she adopted the little airs and graces of

which, only a few short months before, she had been in such utter ignorance. Of course, she could not help taking some of these Castle manners to the farm.

Her elder sister, Javotte, who was married, but still lived with her husband in her old home, did not seek to hide her anger at what she called the girl's insolence. Javotte was an industrious personage, hard upon herself as well as upon others; and she deeply resented Jeannette wasting all her time at the Castle, leaving the other members of the family to get through the work as best they could.

And even when she was at home Jeannette did nothing; all she thought of was to get her dress in order for the occasion of her next visit. What she did in the fields no one knew; the result of her labours with her distaff were never seen at the farm. Javotte remembered how hard her mother had been upon her when she was a girl, and now Jeannette was allowed to do just as she pleased, so long as Mademoiselle Adelaide required her presence at the Castle. A stern sense of justice, mingled with a good deal of jealousy, caused Javotte to become her young sister's enemy.

She did not dare give vent to her sentiments, for she knew she should get no redress from her mother, whose head was completely turned at what she considered Jeannette's triumph. Pierre Gouarhé, his sons, and his son-in-law, were generally at work in the fields, and knew very little of what went on in the house. Gothon was very sad at what she saw, but she took Jeannette's part

against Javotte (behind the child's back), and always tried to find excuses for her. Of course the child was young, and it was but natural that she should like pleasure better than work, and it was not her fault that the people at the Castle liked her so much; her good heart would carry her safely through it all. But Javotte was not to be convinced, and perhaps Gothon herself was somewhat doubtful of the strength of the cause she espoused so warmly.

Jean was never to be seen. Summer is always a very busy time in the country; and, added to that, his father had been ill and confined to his bed for some weeks by an attack of low fever, and the whole work of the farm fell upon the son.

CHAPTER IX.

There's no want of meat, sir ;
Portly and curious viands are prepared
To please all kinds of appetites.

—*Massinger*.

CHAPTER IX.

A FÊTE AT THE CASTLE.

A RUMOUR had got afloat that it was very probable that the Baron would remain at Kerléonik during the winter. Whether or not he ever entertained such an idea is not to the point; but before the autumn leaves had fallen, great news came to the Castle. The King had appointed the Baron lieutenant-in-chief of the royal forests. Not only, therefore, must the idea of wintering at Kerléonik be given up, if it had ever been thought of, but this new appointment would render its Master's presence at Court almost indispensable. It would be many a long day, perhaps, before the Castle would open its gates again to receive its lordly tenants.

The news spread like wildfire through the village. Everyone was sorry, for the Baron was a kind and generous landlord; and, good, honest man though Monsieur Lorhan was, the farmers liked dealing with the master better than with his steward. Meantime, Monsieur Lorhan was distressing himself considerably at the fact that no public demonstration of their good-will had been given by the people to the Baron. Of course it

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had been no one's fault: the period of mourning demanded by the old Baroness' death had put a stop to all rejoicings, but still the absence of any fête in honour of the present Baron was a blot on the annals of Ker-léonik.

But was it irreparable? Could not the mischief be even now remedied? Would it not be possible to organize a kind of public farewell to the family, mingled with expressions of devotion, and the hope that before long the tenants might again welcome their master to his baronial halls?

But how could it be done? What form should the demonstration take? Monsieur Lorhan, who was not a very inventive genius, took Mademoiselle Carmeline into his confidence. She was only too glad to be entrusted with so congenial a task. She would search through some of her old romances, and find something which would at once be new and startling to the Baron and Baroness.

The week that preceded the departure of the family from the Castle was one of extreme bustle.

There were long and secret conferences between Mademoiselle Carmeline, Adelaide, Lisette, and Marton; whilst Jeannette, who now spent every day at the Castle, was admitted into the council-chamber.

Pierre Gouarhé's sheep were left very much to themselves at that time, and the farmer began to wish the grandees would take their departure. The evening before the great day a lamb was missing. It was the

first time that any imputation of negligence could be laid to Cyrus' door.

The morning of the fête dawned. The peasants, men and women, were assembled in the chief court of the Castle in their holiday attire. Monsieur Lorhan was there in his powdered wig, looking very important, and feeling extremely anxious, for he did not in the least know what was going to be done; it was quite evident, however, that Mademoiselle Carmeline had organized something, for garlands of flowers were wreathed above the steps which led to the principal entrance, and a kind of green grotto at the foot of the staircase could not have got there by accident; but the grotto was altogether enclosed, and no one could see who or what was inside it.

'What are we going to do?' said some of the peasants.

'Wish the Baron and Baroness, and their family, a prosperous voyage,' answered others.

'Do you think it will be as it used to be in olden times, when the Baron's father returned from the wars? My grandmother told me that then there was music and dancing, and they drank cider and wine.'

'No one knows. Monsieur Lorhan will not say anything about it.'

'Oh, here are all the tenants arriving. Penvraz of Kerentré,—where are the Gouarhés? Oh, here they come; but Jeannette is not with them. Is she ill?'

'Ill? I met her this morning; of course she will be here; she is such a favourite at the Castle!'

And now the door is thrown wide open, and the Baron and the Baroness, and Adelaide and the baby heir appear, and are greeted with shouts of applause, and cries of 'Long live our master and mistress, and all their family!'

They all bowed and smiled, and the baby clapped his hands; then Monsieur Lorhan, in the name of the tenants, made a long and very prosy speech, through the whole of which Mademoiselle Carmeline and Adelaide kept their eyes fixed upon the grotto.

Then the Baron thanked them all for their kindness and their good wishes, and there was a great deal of applause; and, in the midst of it all, the mysterious grotto opened, and a shepherdess, who seemed to have walked straight out of a fan, ascended the steps and made a graceful bow to the lordly family.

She was exactly like the doll which was so well known to the whole village. There was the same frizzed hair, the same straw hat encircled with flowers, the same green velvet body laced with rose-coloured ribbons, the same silk skirt embroidered with flowers of various colours, the same dainty little apron, the same shoes with rose-coloured rosettes and silver buckles—all the same, even to the crook decorated with ribbons.

She held a basket in her hand,





which contained some snow-white eggs, lying in soft moss, she carried a cage with two turtle doves in it, and behind her walked a lamb, white as soap and water and violet powder had been able to make it.

The poor thing did not seem to like its present position at all, and bleated piteously.

The shepherdess was accompanied by a shepherd, also dressed like a shepherd on a fan, the prominent colour about him being apple-green. He carried a basket of fruit, and both shepherd and shepherdess laid their offerings at the feet of the Baron and Baroness; then he took a flute from his pocket, and she sang a little song to an old Breton tune, wishing health and prosperity, and a speedy return, to the lords and ladies of Kerléonik.

The little play was at an end: the Baroness had embraced the shepherdess, and Mademoiselle Carmeline and Adelaide were flushed with triumph at the success of their endeavours; the footmen and the *soubrettes* laughed, and the peasants thought it all very fine, and wondered who the shepherdess was. Then the Baron thanked his people once more, and begged them all to go into the field nearest the Castle, where refreshments would be provided for them, and where they might dance and sing to their hearts' content, and as long as they pleased.

CHAPTER X.

Love ! oh, young Love !
Why hast thou not security ? Thou art
Like to a bright river, on whose course the weeds
Are thick and heavy.

—*L.E.L.*

CHAPTER X.

POOR JEAN.

THE shepherd gallantly offered his hand to the shepherdess quite in the style of a gentleman accustomed to town life, and together they descended the steps, followed by the lamb, which, it must be confessed, somewhat resisted the efforts made by the shepherdess to pull him by the rose-coloured ribbon which encircled his neck.

The gaily-attired pair stood amongst the peasants now, their identity no longer doubtful. 'Jasmin!' cried some of the crowd. 'Jeannette!' ejaculated others.

Yes, it really was Jasmin the footman, and Jeannette the little shepherdess; all had been arranged by Mademoiselle Carmeline. Chloris had served as a model for the girl's dress; everything was quite satisfactory. Then it became necessary to find a shepherd. Jean was proposed by Adelaide, but the idea was scouted by Jeannette; then Loie was thought of, but he was pronounced far too stupid and clumsy to take the part. Lisette suggested Jasmin, the Baron's valet; Jasmin consented, and we have seen the result.

Everyone seemed pleased with the display, the servants of the Castle and the villagers were all loud in their admiration of both shepherd and shepherdess, and Agathe Gouarhé was prouder than ever at her daughter's success.

But there are exceptions to every rule, and on this occasion there were three people who did not share the general appreciation of the little masquerade.

Gothon was very unhappy. Jeannette in this grand dress! Jeannette singing whilst Jasmin played the flute! Jeannette made to look like the stupid doll Chloris! Oh, that was no longer her Jeannette! 'How will it all end?' sighed the faithful servant, and a great fear took possession of her heart.

Pierre Gouarhé, too, felt uneasy in his mind. True, for Jeannette's sake, the Baron had exempted him from paying certain dues upon his lands, and the Baroness had offered to provide for the girl's future; but, after all, what could be the future of a peasant's daughter, unless, indeed, a little fortune were given her, so that she might marry an honest man, a good Christian, and a good worker? The honest man was at hand. Jean was already Jeannette's affianced husband, and never, through all his life, had he caused one moment's sorrow to anyone. But were these plays, and this smart clothing, and the society of vain *soubrettes*, and lazy footmen and valets, fit training for a girl who must, as a Breton peasant's wife, be honest, and hard-working, and wise?

'The sooner the grand people are off, the better I shall

be pleased,' mused Pierre; 'and I trust it may be a very long time before they come back again.'

If such thoughts as these were in Pierre Gouarhé's mind, what must all this have been to Jean Penvraz?

Jean was simply furious; he looked upon his future life as blighted entirely, and saw everything in the darkest colours.

He remembered how often on winter evenings, when his old mother had sat by the fire and complained of weariness after a hard day's work, his father had bade her cheer up, and remember that, in a very few years, they would have a bright, honest daughter in the old home, who would work for them cheerfully, and let them sit at rest in the chimney-corner.

Then his mother would rouse herself from her complaining mood, and declare that she had plenty of strength left: Jeannette should not do all the work. Then she would praise the girl, and Farmer Penvraz would nod his head by way of approval, and say, 'Yes, she certainly is a good girl, and a pretty girl, and our Jean is a good, brave boy. There is brightness in store for us yet in our old age, my good Fanchon; these children will give us back some of our youth.'

The tears were rolling down honest Jean's cheeks as he thought of these things. 'Poor old people!' he said to himself, 'they will have to give up all their hopes of Jeannette as a daughter. Oh, I am glad they did not come to the fête. What would they have said if they had seen *her*?'

Jeannette really looked very pretty, and her head was so turned by the flattering words poured into her ear on all sides, that she failed to notice Gothon's sadness, or her father's care-worn expression, or Jean's evident anger, or the scornful looks of the women led on by Javotte.



Jasmin continued to play his part of shepherd, and never left her side; the music struck up, and he danced with her—not the wild dances of the country, but such minuets as he had seen danced in Paris and Versailles, and which he now taught Jeannette, who was as apt a pupil at that as she had been at learning the manners of the *soubrettes*.

The Castle servants laughed, Margot and Marianne shrugged their shoulders, and Jean, with bent brows, stood apart leaning on his stick.

Gothon went up to him. 'Jean,' she said, 'come with me.'

'What for?' he asked. 'Why should I not stay here? There are a great many others looking on; why should I not look?'

'No, come! I wish to speak to you,' she continued, trying to draw him away; 'I know all that is in your thoughts; but, remember, they are going away to-morrow. She will not see them again, and it will be as though she had never seen them.'

‘Who knows? She is quite capable of going away with them.’

‘If you thought that, Jean, you would not be doing your duty, staying where you are.’

He looked astonished, and she went on.

‘No; you would not be doing your duty. You would not be keeping your promise. You have promised to protect her, and would you do nothing to keep her from going headlong to ruin? I do not believe she has the smallest idea of going away. I believe she is only amusing herself, like the child she is; but if *you* think it, and you do not try to save her, I repeat you are not doing your duty.’

‘I am not doing my duty! You shall see, Gothon. You shall see, also, whether she will listen to me.’



He pushed away the crowd of spectators, and went up to where Jeannette sat resting upon a bench.

'Jeannette,' he said, 'do you hear the music at the other end of the field? Come there with me. Your father and mother are there, and Gothon, and all who love you.'

Jeannette had no time to answer.

'Hulloa, young man!' said Jasmin. 'You wish to carry off my pupil, I see. She will have plenty of opportunities of dancing to the tune of your rustic pipes. Let me teach the Court dances to my shepherdess; she has a marvellous aptitude for them.'

'Yes! yes!' cried the others, 'let the shepherd dance with his shepherdess! Go and find your equals, young man; go back to your village music.'

And Jean, thus repulsed and baffled, and pursued by the tall footmen shouting in his ear a Breton air, in imitation of the music of the bagpipes, rushed off in a violent passion, without even waiting to see whether Jeannette wished to keep him near her.

CHAPTER XI.

My blood hath been too cold and temperate,
Tho' apt to stir at these indignities;
But you have found me.

—*King Henry IV.*

CHAPTER XI.

A GREAT VICTORY.

JEANNETTE felt anything but happy when she went home that evening. Her conscience smote her for a great deal that had happened that day—aye, for a great deal that had happened for many weeks past; and she fully expected that, either on the way home or when she reached the farm, a good scolding was in store for her from her father.

But Pierre Gouarhé was a prudent individual. Moreover, he had a man's dislike to anything like a scene, so he put off until the next day the hard words he had meant to say to his child; and he commanded Javotte, who was literally brimming over with virtuous indignation, not to say one word to her young sister that night.

When the morning arrived, Pierre Gouarhé had changed his mind. It was true that the Baron had said he should try and return to Kerléonik in the Spring for a short time; but his present position at Court rendered that exceedingly doubtful. Perhaps the family might not be back for years, perhaps they might never

come back at all ; and, therefore, what use was there in scolding the child, who was obstinate and wilful, and would be more likely to do a thing out of a spirit of perversity than because she really cared about it? And, after all, there was nothing now that she could do. She could not dress up as a shepherdess and act in a play, and dance with the footmen and valets of the Castle, for the Castle would be empty. Of course she would feel a little dull at first, but that would soon pass away. It would be time enough to take precautions when the family returned to Kerléonik.

And so, when the next day came, the farmer did not speak one word of rebuke nor of warning to his child. In this he was undoubtedly wrong ; his reasons may have been very good, but it is always better to put people into the right way, than to run the risk of letting them find it for themselves. A few severe words from her father might have cleared Jeannette's brain of the cobwebs of folly and vanity, which had collected there ; but no one spoke to her ; no one (except poor faithful Gothon) gave her one word of warning ; and she went on indulging in her hollow dreams of grandeur, and willingly put away the happiness which was waiting for her at her very door.

Oh, how hard life was to the poor child in those winter months ! How distasteful was the black bread, and the rough living at the farm, after the refinements and luxuries of the Castle !

She told her troubles to Chloris, and asked her many

and many a time whether Adelaide would come back to Kerléonik in the Spring. Chloris did not answer, and perhaps Jeannette thought that silence meant consent. Anyhow, the hope that the Spring would bring her what she longed for was her one consolation in her misery.

For it was misery; because there is no greater trouble than to feel that, by our own fault, we have lost the love of those who once loved us truly.

Pierre Gouarhé, although he did not scold her, seldom spoke to Jeannette. Javotte, however, was not sparing of her words, and lost no opportunity of taunting her young sister. Gothon treated her with a strange mixture of tenderness and pity, very different from her old caressing manner; and Jean, because of the great press of work, and the snow, and the bad roads, excused himself from coming at all to the farm.

Poor Agathe Gouarhé was the only one who still was proud of Jeannette, still boasted of the lucky day when the girl killed the snake with her sabot. And had Adelaide forgotten Jeannette? Indeed she had not. Just about that time it was proposed that she should have a maid of her own, and who so fitting an one as Jeannette? Wherefore Monsieur Lorhan, about to start for Paris on business, receives a letter from the Baron requesting him to go to Pierre Gouarhé's farm and inform the family of the high honour that was intended for Jeannette; he was also ordered to bring the girl with him to Versailles.

The steward, delighted with his mission, walked across

the muddy fields to the Chestnut Farm, picturing to himself by the way, the gratitude with which the Baron's proposal would be received by Pierre Gouarhé and his wife. But when he had sat for a few minutes in the kitchen, and told his errand, he met with no gratitude at all; quite the contrary, in fact. The farmer would not allow his wife to speak, but sent her out to milk the cows; then, firmly, but respectfully, he declined the Baron's offer; and poor Monsieur Lorhan found the walk home far more disagreeable than the walk to the farm had been.

Jeannette need never have known anything about all this, but her mother could not resist telling her of the great honour that had been intended for her; and, of course, from that day she looked upon herself as an innocent victim, kept away by a cruel father from happiness and prosperity; but she made up her mind that, when the family returned to the Castle in the spring, she would throw herself at the Baron's feet, and tell him she would serve Mademoiselle Adelaide for ever, and she would ask him to take her under his protection; then they would all see who was master, the baron or the farmer.

Poor child! she was so lost now to all sense of right, that she forgot that the farmer was her own father.

Meantime she went on from day to day trying to prepare herself for the exalted situation of *soubrette* to Mademoiselle Adelaide.

She made herself a mask to protect herself from the



wind (there was no sun now); she covered her hands with gloves made out of some old rags; she took some flour from her mother's store, so that she might make her complexion white, and she pursued her experiments in the hair-dressing line; whilst Cyrus and the sheep were left to their own devices.

One day, towards the end of the winter, Jeannette was sitting on one of the stones in *Pierres Longues*. Before her, on the trunk of a tree, was her little looking-glass, and she was very busy powdering her hair, and twisting some rose-coloured ribbons into it, when suddenly she was



conscious that something was wrong. She started up, to see the faithful Cyrus literally in the jaws of a fierce wolf; the savage creature's teeth were deep in the noble dog's throat, but still, wounded though he was, he was not vanquished. He made one mighty effort, and bit off

the wolf's ear ; the latter drew back with a fierce yell of pain ; Cyrus ran after him, seized him by the neck, and threw him into the dust. There were the two rolling together, biting and bitten—their blood flowed upon the ground, their cries rent the air ; the sheep fled, terrified, in all directions ; whilst Jeannette, in her distress, stood and shrieked for help. She saw it all now : a little lamb lay helpless and bleeding, but not dead, upon the ground. It was to save the poor thing that Cyrus had fought so nobly.

At last the combat was over—the wolf was dead ; and a party of herdsmen, attracted by Jeannette's cries, appeared upon the scene. Cyrus was lying on the ground desperately wounded, but still breathing, and the men made a litter of branches and laid him on it gently. Jeannette, with considerable difficulty, collected her sheep together, and then the whole *cortège* set out for the Chestnut Farm. The girl had taken up her distaff and the unlucky *Madoiselle* almost mechanically ; all the good feeling that was in her heart—and there *was* some good there still, poor child !—rose up at the sight of the faithful, bleeding dog. She even forgot her ridiculous head-dress, and entered the farm, her hair all powdered, and frizzed, and decked with ribbons.

Pierre Gouarhé was there. What was his fury at seeing his favourite dog wounded, and, perhaps, dying ! and all the work of that miserable doll ; for, of course, he saw at a glance how Jeannette had been occupied. He looked at Cyrus, who lifted his head faintly as

though to ask for a caress; then his eye rested upon Jeannette with her doll in her arms, and in her grotesque attire.

The wrath that had smouldered in the farmer's heart for so long burst forth in its full fury now. He took hold of the girl's arm and shook her violently, at the same time wresting the unconscious Chloris from her grasp.



‘Wretched child!’ he cried, ‘how have you been spending your time, instead of doing your duty as a Christian girl should do it? Get off with you, unless you wish to share *her* fate.’

Overwhelmed with grief and fear, Jeannette stretched out her hands to regain her idol; but the farmer, brandishing Chloris in the air, threw her—Jeannette did not see where, for at the same moment she was violently pushed outside the door of the old farmhouse.

CHAPTER XII.

Blest, though every tear that falls
Doth in its silence of past sorrow tell,
And makes a meeting seem most like a dear farewell.

—*Anon.*

CHAPTER XII.

FLIGHT.

JEANNETTE fell somewhat violently to the ground ; and for an instant felt stunned and bewildered ; but she soon recovered herself, and then she began to think what she had better do.

She could not venture to face her father's wrath, and yet she felt she must know how poor Cyrus was going on, so she determined to hide in the barn until she saw her father go out, and then she would try and find Gothon and ask her the latest news of the faithful dog.

There was a door which led from the barn into the kitchen of the farm house, and Jeannette could distinctly hear herself and her misconduct discussed in loud and angry tones.

Her mother tried to excuse her, but her father would not listen to a single word of extenuation on her behalf. Gothon did not seek to defend her, she only asked that a little indulgence might be granted her on account of her youth ; and it appeared to Jeannette that her father listened patiently to the

faithful servant, and even rebuked Javotte's too voluble tongue.

But he declared that Jeannette should never again set her foot within the Castle walls, and he expressed his determination of not allowing her to come back to the farm house.

'She might go and sleep with the sheep, instead of Cyrus,' he said, 'that would be the proper place for her.'

Jeannette's heart sank within her. So, she was turned out of her home! It had come to this, and she was never again to re-enter the Castle. But her father could not prevent her going there now, if she wished it, and she would go at once. Monsieur Lorhan could not refuse to receive her: as the Baron had given orders not long ago that he should take her with him to Versailles, he would be sure to find some means of sending her there. By the next day she would be far away from the Chestnut Farm. She had had enough of the old life, of the sheep, and all the animals, and the continual fault-finding. She would bid good-bye to it all. And the misguided girl started off briskly in the direction of the Castle.

Jeannette knew every step of the way, she had walked it a hundred times, at all hours, and she was not likely to lose herself, even though the shadows of night were fast falling.

But nothing is so apt as a troubled conscience to make one feel timid and frightened. Jeannette, who

was brave enough in the daytime, shared, like the rest of the villagers, a belief in fairies good and bad, and numberless evil spirits, who transported their victims to all kinds of horrible places, and then left them to die. She did not think very much of the good genii on that winter's night; it was to the evil ones that her troubled conscience pointed, and the further she got from the Farm, the more she trembled and the keener grew her fears.



It was very cold, too, and she was very hungry. The cries of the night-birds seemed to her to be foreboding of evil. The terrible loneliness was oppressive; she tried to say a prayer, but, poor child, she had not prayed for a very long time, and she was so wretched that she greatly feared God would not hear her.

‘My father has turned me out of doors,’ she murmured, ‘how can I expect or hope for mercy from the great God?’

At last she could not walk any more, and sank down weary and exhausted at the foot of an old oak, and there fell asleep.

When she awoke day was breaking, the cold was more intense than ever in the dawn of the March morning, and through the mist it seemed to the frightened girl as though shadowy forms moved amongst the trees.

Then came the sound of wheels. Oh, horror! it must be the chariot of the chief of the evil spirits come to carry her away, and Jeannette gave a long, loud cry, and then fainted.

At this cry the 'chariot' stopped; it was only a plough however, which an industrious labourer was driving towards the field where he was going to work



'Hullo!' shouted a cheery voice. 'Who is it? Why don't you answer? I wish it were not so dark.'

The owner of the voice drew his tinder-box from his pocket and speedily struck a light.

'What on earth is it?' he cried. 'Why, it is—it must be—a woman lying on the ground; wait a minute. Oh, my poor Jeannette!'

And Jean, for he it was, forgot all his anger, and knelt down on the ground at Jeannette's side, to speak

to her tenderly, and to try and bring her back to life by rubbing her hands and breathing upon her pale face.

But it was of no use : Jeannette remained quite still, with closed eyes and clenched teeth.

‘Oh, if she should die!’ cried the poor fellow. ‘I must carry her home ; my mother will know better than I do what is to be done for her.’

He turned the heads of his oxen and told them to go back to the stable, and then he lifted Jeannette gently in his arms, and carried her to his mother.

The good woman, who had risen early, as usual, to begin her household duties, was very much astonished when she heard the oxen and the plough returning to the stable, and, to add to her surprise, the next minute Jean passed the window carrying the fainting Jeannette in his arms.

Of course Jean could only say where he had found the girl ; and the first thing to be done was to try and restore her to consciousness.

So a great log was thrown upon the hearth, and they laid Jeannette before it, and poured some warm milk down her throat, and presently she opened her eyes, and stared around her with a timid, frightened gaze. There is no telling upon what horrors the poor thing thought it might be her punishment to look ; but she closed them again with a sigh of relief, whilst a deep blush came upon her cheek. She did not know how Jean and his mother might receive her.

She was soon reassured by their tenderness and care ;

her weakness was so great, that it served as an excuse for not answering old Madame Penvraz's questions.

'My poor Jeannette! what is the matter? What a mercy that Jean found you! Did you lose yourself? Drink a little more milk, my child. You are better now, are you not? Jean, my boy, go and unharness your oxen; you cannot go to work this morning. You must walk over to the Chestnut Farm, and tell them that the little one is here. They must be terribly anxious about her. Your head is uncomfortable, is it not, Jeannette? Now go and do what I tell you, Jean. I am going to put the child to bed; she is half dead with fatigue.'



When Jean, having unharnessed his oxen, came back for the last news of the invalid, he heard that she was comfortably ensconced in Mother Penvraz's bed; he was also told a little of the story which the girl had confided to her kind old friend.

The latter, who did not know the many provocations which Pierre Gouarhé had endured, thought he had been a little hard upon Jeannette, but she was too sensible to tell her so; on the contrary, she gently and lovingly put before her the wrong she had done, and Jeannette allowed her to send a humble and penitent message to her father by Jean.

Jean himself went off whistling. For many months



he had not felt as happy and joyous as he felt that morning.

The day had risen clear and bright; the wet grass sparkled in the March sunshine, and the little birds sang a glad carol to the returning Spring.

'I have found Jeannette!' was the glad thanksgiving that went up from Jean's honest heart, as he trudged briskly towards the Chestnut Farm.

Pierre Gouarhé had not at first troubled himself much about his child; he thought she would sleep in one of the out-houses, and that to go to bed supperless would not be a bad punishment for her; but when all the rest of the family had retired to rest, Gothon, with a piece of bread in her hand, went to search for the culprit, and could not find her anywhere. She went back to alarm the household, and then there was great consternation; for until those last unhappy months Jeannette had been everyone's pet. She had always been such a bright, merry, obliging little maiden.

They searched for her all through the night; and now, when Jean Penvraz arrived at the farm, it was to find all the women in tears, whilst the farmer sat gloomy and silent in the chimney-corner.

He did not say much when Jean told his news, only the way he clasped the lad's hands told that his suffering all through that wretched night had been as great as anyone's.

When Jeannette, still pale and weak, arrived at the farm next day, no one reproached her, no one spoke of

what had happened, not even of Cyrus' wounds (the noble old fellow was getting better), nor of the wolf, whose skin had been given to Monsieur Lorhan, as a present for the Baron; not even of Chloris, who had entirely disappeared amid the general confusion. Everything seemed restored to order; Jeannette resumed the care of her sheep, and took her distaff out with her, as in the olden days, escorted by a dog who was to replace Cyrus for a time; and Jean began to find some good excuse for walking from Kerentré to the Chestnut Farm every day. And so the time passed on until Easter week.

CHAPTER XIII.

Passion makes the will lord of the reason.

—*Shakespeare.*

CHAPTER XIII.

'I CANNOT MARRY YOU.'

IT was during Easter week that a wedding took place in the old village church. Thomas, the servant at the Chestnut Farm, took to himself a wife, and that wife was none other than the good Gothon.

The newly-married couple were to continue to live at the farm, and Pierre Gouarhé insisted that the wedding should be from his house, the dinner should be at his expense, the dance should take place in his field.

Everyone loved Thomas and Gothon, and all the villagers brought them presents according to their respective means, and it was said that so grand a fête had not been known for years, although the bride and bridegroom were but farm servants.

It was at this wedding, however, that Jeannette once more began to indulge in her foolish fancies; this fête reminded her of another, where she had been the queen, and set her longing for the grandeur of the Castle, and for the society of the *soubrettes*, and valets, and footmen.

She was not very happy yet. When folks have done

wrong, it takes a long time to go back to the old ways—in fact, it is doubtful whether one can ever quite go back to them; something, some old haunting memory, seems to come unbidden to one's mind, and there is a difference in one's life—a little cloud is there that was not there before.

The family at the farm (Javotte included) had forgiven Jeannette, Jean had forgiven her, but the villagers and the Kerléonik tenants had not forgotten the day when the farmer's daughter gave herself such ridiculous airs, and the Breton folk highly disapproved of masquerading. The part the girl had played on that memorable day had caused them to rank her with an actress—a class of whom they stood in virtuous horror.

No one spoke to her, no one cared about her: had it not been for Jean, she would have been alone the whole day long. She was very grateful to him for his goodness, but could he make up for all that she had lost?

It seems that he could not; for, after Gothon's wedding, Jeannette again became grave and preoccupied, and longed more than ever for the return of the Baron and his family.

In June, Lafleur, one of the valets, arrived at the Castle, to consult with Monsieur Lorhan and Madame Levellec about some alterations that were to be made in some of the rooms.

The Baron hoped to be able to revisit Kerléonik, and to fill the Castle with guests during the hunting season.

Pierre Gouarhé heard the news with considerable

vexation. If the young mistress sent for Jeannette, how could he say that he would not allow her to go to the Castle? It would not be possible for him to do so.

Then a bright idea struck him; if it was not possible to refuse permission to a little shepherdess to go at her lord's bidding to amuse his daughter, it would be an entirely different affair if the little shepherdess could, before the Autumn, be turned into a wife, with her house to look after, and her husband to take care of her.

Jeannette was just sixteen and a half, and looked quite eighteen; she must be married to Jean before the influx of visitors at the Castle took place. Of course it would be somewhat earlier than the original time fixed upon; but what did that matter, when it would save so much risk and trouble?

So it was settled between the elders; and old Farmer Penvraz bade his wife prepare their new daughter's room, and the good, loving old soul spent her time and strength in making the farmhouse look brighter and more comfortable than it had looked for many a long year.

Jean and Jeannette were of course the last to be consulted in the matter. What need was there to say anything to them as to the time of the marriage? The fact itself had been settled for the last sixteen years, and of course they would only be too glad to have the wedding put on; it would be an agreeable surprise to them.

'Jean,' said old Farmer Penvraz, one morning, as

the two walked together towards a field they were going to mow, 'Jean, when you have finished your work, you had better go and find Jeannette; Gouarhé and I have agreed that your wedding had better take place in about six weeks from this time.'

'Yes, Father, I will go,' answered Jean, quietly; but his heart was very full of joy, as he mowed vigorously and quickly. He was always industrious, but that morning it seemed as though new strength and power had come to him.

To work for one's bread is the law of necessity; to work for the father and mother who have watched over one's young life is a pleasant task; but to work for the woman one loves, and who is to be the partner of the joys and sorrows of one's life; to toil, never mind how hard, for the children God has given one—this is the joy and glory of a man; it is the fulfilment of his destiny; and Jean, as he mowed, said to himself, 'From this day, the work that I do is done for her!'

His task was over at last, and he went up to his father to bid him good-bye.

The old man looked at him for a moment, and the tears stood in his eyes; perhaps he was thinking of a day, long, long ago, when his wife, now so feeble and ailing, had been young and bright as Jeannette was; and when they began life together, so full of hope,—that life which had been very hard to them; but they had loved each other through it all!

Penvraz put his trembling hand on Jean's head, and

said, 'God bless you, my boy ; and grant that you may rule your home according to His will !'

He turned away and went home to his old wife, whilst Jean, with rapid strides, made his way to *Pierres Longues*, where he knew he should find Jeannette.

Upon what seemingly small chances hang the events of this life ! There is no telling whether, if Jean had visited Jeannette in the early morning, instead of waiting until he had done his work, he might not have received a different answer from the one he *did* receive ; but, whilst he was mowing, Jeannette, sitting on the old stone, spinning—Cyrus, quite recovered from his wounds, lying by her side, the sheep taking their usual morning



meal—saw a man approach, who presently took off his hat to her, when she at once recognised Lafleur, the valet.

'How do you do, Monsieur Lafleur ?' she said.

'How do you do, Mademoiselle Jeannette ?'

Then began a long conversation. The shepherdess was eager for news of Mademoiselle Adelaide, and Lafleur told her that she was growing very lovely, and was very much admired; he also announced the young lady's determination to have Jeannette for her maid—all would be settled when the family arrived in the autumn. Marton and Lisette had begged him (Lafleur) to remember them very kindly to Jeannette; and as for Jasmin, directly he had heard that his comrade was going to Kerléonik, he said, 'Do not forget to tell my little shepherdess that I throw myself entirely at her feet, and assure her of my entire devotion to her!'

Whether Jasmin had ever sent such a message, or whether it was a pure invention of Lafleur's, matters little. Poor Jeannette believed it, and was transported with delight.

Jasmin had assured her of his devotion, had she not felt that it was so, ever since the night of the fête at the Castle, when he had paid her all those compliments! And now he was coming back, he would ask her hand in marriage of her father, or rather, perhaps, of the Baron, so that he could not be refused; she would become Madame Jasmin, and she would be Mademoiselle Adelaide's *soubrette*; she would dress in flowered skirts and muslin aprons, and live in castles and grand houses, in the same town as the King himself!

Lafleur had taken his departure when Jean arrived, looking happy and joyous, his heart beating very fast.

He had stopped at a clear stream and washed his face, and smoothed his long fair hair, and arranged his working dress; he wanted to look as well as he could in Jeannette's eyes on that sweet June afternoon.

He had washed his sabots too, and put a bunch of broom in his large hat.

With his fine figure, his regular features, and his frank, honest air, he was certainly a much better looking fellow than either Jasmin or Lafleur, or any of the grand servants at the Castle; but Jeannette failed to see this. After a time he said to her, as tenderly as he could, 'Jeannette, our elders have decided that we are to be married in August—shall we be betrothed on Sunday? Never, since I could think at all, have I had any other thought but that some day I should be your husband. All I ask is that I may make you happy: with God's help, I will do so as long as I live.'

Jeannette turned her head away with a gesture of disdain.

'No,' she said. 'I cannot marry you!'

Jean's face was clouded in an instant.

'You *cannot*!' he cried, the tender tone changing into one of indignation. 'You *cannot*! What is the reason of this, Jeannette? What is to prevent it? You cannot, Jeannette—is it true? Rather is it, that you *will* not?'

'It is the same thing,' she answered.

'You *will* not! What have I done—since when have I done anything? My mother expects you; to

be my wife; my father loves you—And I!—oh! Jeannette, do you wish to make us all die of grief? Tell me why you *will* not.'

'Because a woman cannot have two husbands, and I suppose a girl is at liberty to choose for herself? The Baron is coming back to the Castle, and he will give me to Monsieur Jasmin. I shall be Mademoiselle's *soubrette*. I shall wear fine clothes, and live at Versailles. I daresay I shall go to Court with my mistress! That is why I will not marry you!'

Jean could not answer; he stood before Jeannette pale as death, whilst two great tears rolled down his cheeks. To look at him would have moved a heart of stone; but Jeannette's heart at that moment was harder than stone. She rose from her seat and called Cyrus, and told him to take the sheep home. The dog looked astonished, and evidently thought it too early to return to the farm, but obeyed his young mistress' commands, and dog, sheep, and shepherdess were soon out of sight.

Jean remained standing where Jeannette had left him; it had been such a terribly sudden blow; it had stunned and bewildered him completely.

'She will not! she will not!' he repeated, plaintively; that was the one prominent thought in the poor fellow's mind; then he said to himself, 'My father and mother are expecting me—I must go home.'

But he did not move for a long time. He thought she *must* come back to him. At last, with a mighty

effort, he dragged himself away from *Pierres Longues*. It was there that Jeannette had killed the snake. Oh! why was that good, brave action to be the beginning of such terrible evil?

Poor Jean walked like a tipsy man, and in his abstraction turned his back upon Kerentré. When he perceived what he had done, he did not retrace his steps.

‘I cannot go home in this state,’ he thought. My mother would be so troubled to see me; I had better wait a little and try to recover myself; and he went on along the road; but had not gone very far when he met Thomas, Gothon’s tall husband.

‘I am very glad to see you, Thomas,’ he said; ‘you can do me a great favour. Will you go to Kerentré, and tell my father that Jeannette will have nothing to say to me, and that I do not wish her to be annoyed on my account? Do not let them be anxious about me; I will be back in the evening. I am only going to take a little walk.’ And without waiting to listen to Thomas’ expressions of sympathy, Jean walked quickly on towards the high road.



CHAPTER XIV.

“It is in length of patience, endurance, and forbearance, that so much of what is good in mankind and womankind is shewn.”

—*Arthur Helps.*

CHAPTER XIV.

WATCHING AND WAITING.

OLD Farmer Penvraz walked home rather slowly after he had parted with his son; he had two scythes to carry, instead of one, but he did not lose his temper because he was burdened with a heavier weight than usual; on the contrary, he laughed within himself, and said,—

‘The boy must have been half wild with delight to have left his scythe behind him for me to bring home; he who is always so thoughtful, and who always carries my burdens as well as his own.’

‘Where is Jean?’ said his wife, as the old man approached the farm, and saw her standing in the doorway.

Penvraz pointed laughingly to the road which led to the Chestnut Farm; and the old woman understood him, and she laughed also. Then she took the scythes from her husband and carried them into the barn; and when she came back to him she said,—

‘How did he take it—what did he say?’

‘He said nothing but ‘Yes, father, I will!’ But he

looked very happy. And now let us have our dinner; it is of no use waiting for Jean. The young people will have so much to say to each other; and perhaps Jeannette will take him home with her, and he will dine with the Gouarhé. Why, Fanchon, he mowed three parts of the field himself! I let him do it, it amused me to see him; he is so brave, and strong, and active—such a fine fellow. It seemed very hard, wife, when one by one God took our children from us; but sometimes I think that it pleased Him to leave us the best of them all.'

'You are right,' answered the old woman, giving a deep sigh to the memory of the little ones she had loved and lost. 'But do you think Jean will be home to supper? Perhaps he will bring some of the Gouarhé's with him. I must set about making some cakes. Dear little Jeannette, how glad I shall be to have her here! I think she had better have the large room; the rain does not come in through the roof, as it does in the smaller one. The young lady at the Castle ought to have our house repaired for us, as she thinks so much of the child.'

So the poor old soul chattered on, serving her husband's dinner, and feeding the fowls, who appeared clacking at the door, and announcing to her favourite grey cat that he would soon have two mistresses instead of one.

Truly, that summer's day was a very happy one, so far, for the old Penvraza.

Towards evening they said to each other,—

'He will soon be here now.' And the loving mother

took her spinning-wheel out of doors, that she might be the first to welcome her boy. Every minute she looked up in the direction of the Chestnut Farm; but Jean did not come.

After a time old Penvraz joined his wife, and brought his pipe to the bench where she sat.

‘Ah!’ he cried, ‘here he comes at last.’

A man was approaching and drew near to the old couple, but it was not Jean.

‘It is Thomas!’ they both exclaimed. ‘He is come from the Gouarhé to invite us to go there.’ And she stopped her spinning-wheel, and, with her husband, went to meet the farm-servant.

Thomas looked troubled, and Jean’s mother thought that something must have happened to her boy; either he had fallen down a precipice, or been tossed by a bull, or been bitten by a snake; she never imagined anything approaching to the truth; and when she heard it her surprise and anger were very great.

She said a great many hard things of Jeannette, which the girl richly deserved; but, although she was very indignant at the insult offered to her son, she believed that in time all would be right. Gouarhé and Penvraz both wished the marriage to take place, and of course it must take place. Jeannette would only be too glad to be Jean’s wife, for where else could she find so good a husband? So she made up her mind as to what she would say to her boy on his return, by way of encouragement and consolation.



The sun went down, the shadows deepened, night fell upon the peaceful landscape, and still Jean did not come home. The stars shone in the cloudless sky, and still there was no sign of him; and those poor old people waited and watched in the old farm-house at Kerentré, through the silent hours, till there was a rosy light in the East, telling of the dawning of another day.

The mother wept and lamented, and put forward all kinds of reasons as to why the lad had not come home; the father said nothing, but at daybreak he put on his sabots, and went out to look for his son.

All through those sad hours which followed that happy day when she and her husband had so rejoiced in their Jean's joy, the poor old woman sat and watched, and strained her eyes to look in the distance, for the return of her loved ones. But neither of them came; neither Penvraz nor Jean. Could it be that they were both lost?

At night the farmer came back, alone—worn out with grief and fatigue. He had been to the Chestnut Farm to inquire of Thomas exactly where he had seen Jean; it was a long way off, almost further than his old legs could carry him; still he went on and on, inquiring of everyone he met whether his boy had passed that way; but no one had seen Jean, no one knew anything about

him. At last, worn out with fatigue, poor old Penvraz had fallen down at the foot of a Calvary, and there he would probably have remained if a farmer passing in his cart had not found him, and driven him to within a few yards of his own door. How often during that night, and the many nights that followed, did the poor old couple, overcome with sleep, in spite of themselves, start up from their beds at the sound of the wind coming through the worn-out boards of their door, thinking that Jean was knocking for admission !

But the nights and days passed on into weeks, and the boy did not come home.

In vain they sought to obtain some tidings of him from the beggars who roamed about the country, or from the numerous pilgrims who came from a distance ; no one had seen the fine young fellow, nor any one answering to his description.

They caused his body to be searched for in the ravines and the ponds—not that they for one moment imagined that he had committed suicide ; he was too good a Christian for that ; but he might have met with an accident in the dark, far away from all human help. Living or dead, however, poor Jean was not to be found.

At last a notion gained ground amongst the villagers that the lad had been spirited away ; the superstition was a common one in Brittany, and the old people were shunned by their neighbours, because, if such a misfortune falls upon a child, the parents are supposed to

have done something or other to account for it. The poor souls themselves saw nothing of all this, they were entirely absorbed in their own bitter grief;



and what did they care whether visitors came to their hearth now, when Jean was no longer there to welcome them.

Sadly enough they went to their daily toil; and when evening came and they sat together in the kitchen, old Penvraz was silent and sorrowful, whilst his wife indulged in bitter invectives against Jeannette, whom she had loved so much, and who was the cause of all this misery.

And how was it with Jeannette herself?

She was unhappy enough in those days; her father never spoke to her, but to reproach her; Javotte was

triumphant, and even her mother did not dare to take her part; she had been very fond of Jean, and grieved over his absence. None of the villagers would speak to her, and even the children would run away when they saw her, and say, 'That is the wicked girl who has brought such trouble upon the poor old Penvrazs.'

Gothon alone never spoke unkindly to her. She seldom addressed her; she knew, in her present mood, all the talking in the world would be of no use; but she waited patiently for the first sign of repentance; then she would open her honest, loving arms to the child she had always cared for so much.



Jeannette avoided the Penvrazs altogether. She could not bear to hear them spoken of; she was very sorry for them, she pitied them very much, the thought of them made her very sad—but this was not repentance.

She had refused Jean, it was true; but was that any reason why he should have run away from his parents, and made everything so disagreeable for her? It was Jean who was in the wrong; *she* could not have acted otherwise. Her father was very angry; but all would soon be right, for the Baron would return, and insist upon the farmer giving his daughter to Jasmin.

Then there would be a grand wedding at the Castle, and all her enemies would only be too glad if she invited them to be present at it.

Thus Jeannette consoled herself; and, with these ideas in her foolish little head, was able to bear her position of the black sheep of the family with tolerable equanimity.

CHAPTER XV.

Nor let the time thou owest to God, be spent
In idly dreaming how thou mightest be.

—*Archbishop Trench.*

CHAPTER XV.

CASTLES IN THE AIR.

IN September, when the woods round Kerléonik were bright with the sweet autumnal tints, the family returned to the Castle; a great many visitors with their *soubrettes* and valets arrived with them, and Monsieur Lorhan was as busy as he could possibly be, going about to the different farmers to receive their tithes, both in money and in kind. He visited the Chestnut Farm amongst others, and Jeannette, who was at home at the time, listened anxiously to all he said, hoping to hear some message for herself, some command from Mademoiselle Adelaide, that she should at once go to the Castle. Not one word was spoken about her, however; could it be possible that she was forgotten amid all the gaiety and bustle of the numberless visitors?

The girl could not bear the thought of this; so the next day, when she went out with the sheep, she carried with her a little bundle containing her fête-day attire, and when she reached *Pierres Longues* she dressed herself in the same dress in which she had so often

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appeared at the Castle, and leaving her flock in Cyrus' care (he was sufficiently recovered to be able to resume his situation), she walked on as fast as she could to Kerléonik.

The great Court was crowded with strange servants when she entered it. Jeannette, in her Breton costume, was a novelty to them; they had not much to do, and were bent upon amusement, so they gathered round the girl, and laughed and jeered, and asked her who she was, and what she wanted? To which the girl answered,—

‘I am Jeannette, and I have come to see Mademoiselle Kerléonik.’

A roar of laughter greeted this announcement.

‘Jeannette! What a pretty name! Perhaps she is a Princess in disguise.’

‘That’s it, Princess Jeannette!’

‘Where has her royal highness left her suite?’

‘Her royal highness travels *incognito*.’

‘And so wears the costume of the country.’

‘Well, it suits her very well!’

Jeannette, covered with shame and confusion, stood trembling in their midst; those last few months of vanity and self-indulgence had robbed the child of much of her natural honest courage.

She did not know what to answer; she saw no means of escape. Suddenly a deliverer appeared upon the scene, in the person of Jasmin himself.

‘My shepherdess!’ he cried, bowing profoundly, ‘allow your faithful shepherd to conduct you to where

he knows you wish to go,' and he held out his hand with the air of a lord.

Jeannette, proud and happy, touched it with the tips of her fingers.

There was another burst of laughter from the lookers-on.

'Jasmin knows the Princess,' they said. 'Happy Jasmin !'

'She is my shepherdess,' he answered. 'I was Myrtle, and she was my Chloris. Stand back, I am going to conduct her to our young mistress.'



Thus it was that, under Jasmin's protection, Jeannette re-entered the Castle of Kerléonik.

Adelaide, who had grown very much during the year of her absence, was at her toilette, submitting to all kinds of decorations at the hands of Lisette ; when she saw the young shepherdess, however, she bounded for-

ward without any apparent regard for her fine clothes, and threw her arms round Jeannette's neck.

'Oh, Jeannette, how glad I am to see you! I have not had time to send for you; it was quite right of you to come. As soon as I can I mean to come to the farm, and your mother will make me some pancakes—will she not? And how are the fowls and the ducks, and Cyrus? How nice you look, and how you have grown! It is quite time you should be married, and I mean to dance at your wedding.'

The luncheon-bell rang and put a stop to the girl's chatter.

'Do make haste, Lisette!' she cried. 'I am not half ready. Jeannette will hold the pins for you.'

'Hold the pins!' Jeannette's heart beat high with hope. Surely this was an introduction to the coveted post of *soubrette*.

'By the way,' continued the irrepressible Adelaide, 'I was very sorry you could not come to me at Versailles, but of course your father had a very good reason for refusing; it would not have done to separate the shepherdess from her shepherd. That poor, good Jean, I should have been very sorry to grieve him.'

Jeannette felt herself gradually descending from her pinnacle of greatness.

Adelaide's toilette was completed at last. Lisette was satisfied. Jeannette, with a heavy heart, looked upon the young lady's grandeur, but could find no words in which to convey her admiration.

‘You will come and see me very often, will you not?’ said Adelaide, as she was leaving the room. ‘I hope you will be married whilst we are at the Castle. I mean to give you a very pretty present; you shall choose it for yourself. I like weddings; I have promised Marton to go to hers, for you know Marton is going to be married soon. Ah! by the bye, you know her intended; it is Jasmin, your shepherd!’

And the merry girl ran off, leaving Jeannette standing there as one petrified.

Suddenly there came to her mind a little story which Adelaide had once told her: it was about a dog who let go his prey so that he might seize upon its shadow.

Yes, she was like that dog. She had repulsed the brave, noble Jean for Jasmin, who had but laughed at her.

Her one wish was to run away without speaking to anyone. Lisette was busy putting away her young mistress’s things; and poor Jeannette flew out of the room and down the long passages into the fresh September air, and then she never ceased running until she reached *Pierres Longues*.

CHAPTER XVI.

I hae been to the wild-wood ; Mother, make my bed soon,
For I'm weary wi' hunting, and fain would lie down.

—*Lord Randal.*

CHAPTER XVI.

A FAITHFUL FRIEND.

THEN she threw herself upon the ground, and cried as she had not cried since she was a little child. When her grief had become spent, she sat up and asked herself the reason of it all. One by one the memories of all those wasted months rose up before her, and she saw herself as she had never seen herself before ; and the future looked dreary and desolate indeed !

Where could she find comfort ? Not in her own home ; she had behaved too badly to them all to expect that. True, her mother would be good to her, and talk to her of the castle and its grandeur ; but it was not that that poor Jeannette wanted—no, she hated the very name of the Castle ; her father might save himself the trouble of forbidding her to go there. Never, never would she cross its threshold again. Should she go to Kerentré ? Oh no ! for there they must surely hate her. She thought of that dark March morning when Jean had found her so ill, and so unhappy. She thought of all old Fanchon Penvraz's love and care of her ; and her tears flowed afresh, and she cried in very bitterness of spirit :

‘O God! have pity on me, and let me die; for I have no one in all the wide world to love me.’

Something soft and warm was pressed against her cheek at that moment; she opened her eyes, and took her hands away from her face. Cyrus was there: he had seen her come back, he had heard her sobs, and he had walked up to her and looked at her, hoping, probably, that she would speak to him; but, seeing that she did not notice him, he had ventured to poke his nose under the brown hands which covered the poor tear-stained face; and when he found that he was not repulsed, he put both his paws upon her shoulders, and literally covered her with caresses.



Jeannette, in her turn, put her arms round the faithful dog's neck, and pressed him to her aching heart.

Then Cyrus, delighted at the unwonted mark of affection, wagged his tail, and rubbed his shaggy head against the girl's cheek, whilst she cried still, but they were tears of thankfulness for the good old fellow's love.

‘You love me still then, Cyrus?’ she said. ‘You forgive me, although it was my fault that you nearly died. You are my only friend; you do not forsake me.’ To which, by renewed waggings of his tail, Cyrus replied satisfactorily.

After a time poor Jeannette went home as usual, and

no one noticed any difference in her manner, except perhaps that she was more humble and respectful than she had been lately.

Pierre Gouarhé was out that day, and did not return until the middle of the night. He had been a long journey to the distant village of S. Luc on an errand of his own. It so happened that one of the valets of the Castle told the story of Jeannette's visit, with his own additions and improvements, to two or three of the tenants with whom he came in contact; it was repeated



to the farmer, whose fury knew no bounds; and it was because he had heard this, that he sent Thomas home with the cart and one horse, and rode the other to S. Luc.

There lived in the quaint old village a certain Dame

Lucette, who was Pierre Gouarhé's cousin; she kept the one inn of the place, and did a thriving business. Whenever she saw the farmer she always took great interest in his family, and two or three times she had asked him to let his youngest daughter stay with her for a time to help her in her business.

Here was the very place to send her to now. When next she was sent for to the Castle, the answer would be that 'she had left the place.'

Pierre Gouarhé told his tale to Dame Lucette. The worthy woman said she should be delighted to receive her young cousin, and it was settled that her father was to drive her to S. Luc the very next day.

Notwithstanding the late hour at which the farmer retired to his rest, he was up at his usual hour, and the first thing he did was to send for Jeannette, and bid her pack up her things, as he was going to take her to S. Luc.

He had expected tears, and perhaps resistance; he did not know the relief it was to Jeannette to get away from the neighbourhood of the Castle; he was, therefore, much astonished at her calmness and submission.

She quickly packed up her little bundle, bid farewell to the household, and mounted the cart with alacrity.

As they drove past the sheepfold, Cyrus was waiting there, thinking it high time to be on the move; at the unwonted sight, however, of Jeannette sitting by her father's side in the cart, he manifested considerable excitement, and ran in front of the horse, and barked

loudly, as much as to say, 'Where are you going? Why are you leaving me? Are we not good friends?'

Jeannette, who had parted from her family without the smallest sign of regret, could not resist calling the dog to her; he jumped up into the cart, and she bade him 'good-bye,' whilst her tears fell upon his shaggy coat.

Cyrus was evidently anxious to continue his drive, but the farmer said, 'To your sheep, Cyrus;' and the dog went back to the sheepfold, following the cart with his brown eyes until it was out of sight. Pierre Gouarhé, angry though he was with his daughter, could not help being touched.

'After all,' he mused, 'there must be some good in the child still, since she loves her dog, and he loves her.'

He began to be a little more gentle in his manner to her, and when he left her at S. Luc in Dame Lucette's care, he kissed her and said, 'Good-bye, little one; be a good girl, and let me hear a good character of you.'

'I will try to please you, father,' answered Jeannette, humbly; and then they parted.

CHAPTER XVII.

The light behind the veil unseen,
Our only clue what once hath been,
Dark seems life mystery ;
I cannot know, I dare not guess,
The greater is not in the less,
Nor God's high will in me.

—*Fletcher.*

CHAPTER XVII.

NEWS.

AFTER a few days Mademoiselle Adelaide sent for Jeannette, and received for answer that the girl had gone on a long visit to S. Luc; so the Castle trouble was at an end for the present.

A few weeks after he had taken her to Dame Lucette, Pierre Gouarhé thought he would go and see how the child was getting on.

The good Dame gave her a most excellent character; she was gentle and industrious, and polite to the customers, only she was sad, very sad; it pained her cousin to see a child of her age so sorrowful.

Pierre Gouarhé said nothing, but he went to S. Luc again in a fortnight, and this time he took Cyrus with him; and Jeannette's joy at seeing the faithful-dog was very great: as for Cyrus, his transports knew no bound.

Jeannette was still sad; her repentance had begun at last. 'I deserved it all,' she would say to herself when Javotte's hard words and the villagers' taunts rose up before her, and caused her to bow her head in very shame; but the most haunting memory of all was connected with

Jean and the old Penvraz ! Poor old people ! So good, so gentle, so loving to her ! more indulgent than her own father and mother had ever been ! They had loved her as their daughter, and she had robbed them of their son !

She longed to go to Kerentré, and throw herself at their feet, and ask their pardon for the great wrong she had done them ; but would she ever dare show herself to them again ? And Jean ? She felt she would willingly endure any suffering only if she could be sure that Jean was alive, and that some day he would return to his old home. She did not think of herself now ; sorrow for the pain she had caused to so many was the feeling uppermost in her heart : it was this that caused her to look so sad, and pale, and thin.

The barber of S. Luc—a great authority in all matters of illness—was called upon to prescribe for her. He said she had a fever, and gave her some medicine, which of course did not do her one bit of good.

Dame Lucette's inn, the 'Golden Apple,' enjoyed a very high repute. It was frequented by all kinds of people from the highest to the lowest, and no one ever turned away from the door in any way dissatisfied with the good cheer provided by the landlady. She was a good woman, who never turned away a beggar who sought her charity ; for she knew that in God's own Book it is written—

'He that hath pity upon the poor lendeth to the Lord.'

One February day, a poor broken-down soldier passed



through the village of S. Luc ; his clothes were torn, and he had a wooden leg : his whole aspect was one of extreme poverty. He looked up longingly at the comfortable inn, and sighed ; it was much too grand a place for such an one as he was, but he sat himself down to rest awhile on the stone bench outside the inn windows. Dame Lucette happened to be flattening her nose against the window-pane at this particular moment, and she called out to Jeannette :

‘Come at once and look at this poor soldier ; he has been to the wars, I suppose, and has only one leg ! It makes one’s heart ache to see such sights ; the King takes fine, strong young men to send to fight for him, and this is how they come back to us after having shed their blood for him. Here, soldier ! sir ! why do you sit there ? Will you not come into the kitchen ? There is a good fire there, and you can have some soup and a bottle of wine, which I am sure will do you good.’

The soldier was very grateful ; he would gladly go into the kitchen and warm himself, but he had already had his breakfast ; if he might take away a piece of bread for his supper, that would be quite enough ; soldiers were not rich.

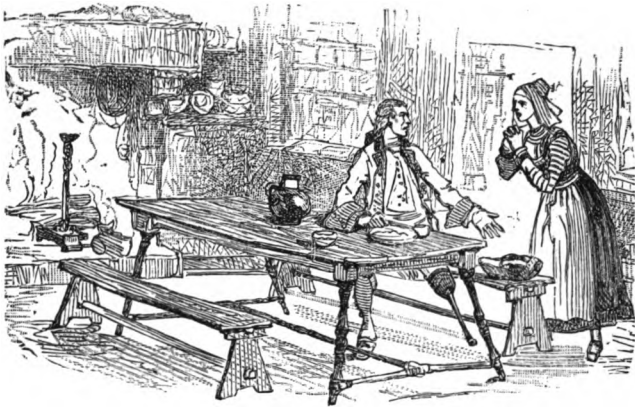
Dame Lucette laughed. ‘It will be all right,’ she said, ‘we will arrange it all by-and-by. Come into the kitchen, now, and tell us your news, and Jeannette will bring you some soup and some pork.’

When the poor fellow had had something to eat and drink, he told his story. He had been on board one of

the King's vessels, fighting for his country; he had lost his leg and was pensioned off; he did not quite know what he was going to do, but he had a married sister living in a far away Breton village, and he was trying to get to her.

Dame Lucette packed up a little parcel of food for him, and when Jeannette took it to him he said:—

‘Thanks, my pretty girl; I was never in Brittany until now, but the way you speak reminds me of one of



my comrades, a good fellow, to whom I owe my life, he came from a place called Kerentré——’

‘Jean!’ cried Jeannette, ‘was his name Jean? Jean Penvraz?’

‘Yes, that was his name! Are you his sister?’

‘No, not his sister; but I have known him all my life. Oh, tell me where he is! Is he alive?’

‘He is on board one of His Majesty’s ships, “The Dauphin.” The English attacked us, and we fired upon one of their frigates, the “Arethusa,” and I should imagine we nearly did for her; but I did not see the end of it. I was wounded and sent ashore. Jean was all right when I left the ship—of course it is impossible to tell what may have happened since.’

Jeannette did not heed these last words. The gallant soldier had seen Jean alive. That was enough for her.

‘He lives! he lives!’ she cried, ‘Oh, how happy his poor old father and mother will be. But why have we never heard of him; why did he not even tell us that he was going to be a soldier?’

‘Why? Well, in the first place he cannot write; and secondly, he did not know himself that he was going to be a soldier. He was very unhappy one evening, and he walked a very long way to try and walk off his grief, and at last he came to an inn, and sat down to rest and refresh himself.

‘There was an individual there who said he was a friend of the host; he asked Jean to drink the King’s health, and he drank it; then, worn out with fatigue, he fell asleep; when he awoke he was no longer in the inn, but in a prison, where he had been carried. There a paper was read to him (he could not read himself), which stated that he had promised to be a soldier for six years, and that the fact of having drank the King’s health prevented him from drawing back from his engagement. The landlord’s friend was one of those people employed

to entice young men to enlist, and they frightened poor Jean into putting his cross to the document which he had never seen.

‘He tried to escape, but he was kept in prison until the recruiting-sergeant arrived, then he was put into a uniform and drafted into a regiment. He no longer thought of escape, for he would of course have been taken and shot as a deserter. That is how soldiers are made, my pretty girl ; and yet it does not prevent their doing their duty when they are face to face with the enemy.’

‘And Jean is to be a soldier for six years, and he has not been gone one year yet ! Six years ! Will he not be able to come home for all that long time ?’

‘Impossible ! unless, indeed, he should lose a limb as I have done. You would not like that, would you ? Perhaps if you knew anyone who could speak to the King it might be possible to buy him off ; anyhow, there would be a chance of it. Jean is now serving in the “Dauphin,” one of the Comte d’Orvillier’s fleet.’

Then the soldier took his crutch and his parcel of food, and went on his way.

CHAPTER XVIII.

There's discontent from sceptre to the swain,
And from the peasant to the king again.

—*Dryden.*

CHAPTER XVIII.

JOY AND SORROW.

THE first thing that Jeannette did when the soldier was gone was to run to her room, put on her cloak and her sabots, and then find Dame Lucette and ask her leave to go and tell the old Penvraz that their son was still alive.

The good Dame screamed for joy when she heard the news, and she hurried the girl off, telling her if she did not make haste she would be benighted; for Kerentré was three leagues and a half off, and it was now two o'clock. Jeannette almost flew to the Penvraz' farm with her joyful news. The day's work was just over; when she got there the door was shut.

When old Penvraz heard a knock at the door—an unusual circumstance—he turned deadly pale, and his wife murmured, 'Oh! if it should be Jean!'

The old man opened the door, and drew back at the sight of Jeannette.

For an instant the poor girl forgot the joyful tidings of which she was the bearer, and thought only of the past, and she bent her head and stood there silent and

sorrowful. Then she recovered herself and went into the house, and said in trembling tones, 'I have come from S. Luc to tell you that Jean is alive ; I have seen some one to-day who saw him two months ago.'

Two cries of exceeding joy resounded through the little room, and Jeannette was in the arms of the two old people, who laughed, and cried, and thanked her by turns. All she had done in the past was forgotten,



in their great thankfulness for the tidings she had brought them.

Jeannette slept soundly that night under the Penvraz' roof ; they, poor souls, did not sleep at all ; they were too happy to think of closing their eyes ; and, besides this, they were trying to put into words the request they were going to make the Baron, who was to help them, by a petition to the King, to buy their boy off.

The next day, however, they heard that the Baron had left the Castle. They asked Monsieur Lorhan to write to him; but the steward shook his head, and answered that to buy a soldier off in time of war was a perfect impossibility; and the hearts of those who loved Jean sank within them when they remembered all the risks to which he was daily exposed. What might not have happened during those two months which had elapsed since the wounded soldier had seen him!

There being no longer any reason why Jeannette should not return to her home; and as there was plenty of work to do at the farm, and she could ill be spared, she took a grateful farewell of good Dame Lucette, and went back to the Chestnut Farm.

But she was no longer to be a shepherdess, Javotte's eldest boy had taken her place with the sheep, and she was employed with the other women about the farm.

She was very unhappy still; it was almost worse to know Jean was exposed to all the fearful perils of war, than to have had the hope that some day he would return safe and well. His poor old father and mother became almost more miserable than they had been before, and she was the cause of it all; she sank into a morbid state, not liking to receive any kindness because she felt it was undeserved, and yet ever on the look-out for fancied slights and injuries. Sometimes she went to do a day's work for Fanchon Penvraz, who was growing weaker and weaker, but the sight of Jean's old home

was almost more than she could bear—the old home from which she had driven him.

And what of Jean himself? He was a soldier in name, and he tried to do his duty. He heard a great deal of talk about the English and the Americans, but he understood very little about it. He did what he was told on board the ship; and when the word “fire,” was given, he fired like the others. He heard the bullets whizzing past him; he saw his comrades dying around him; he himself escaped with a few scratches. Through it all, he was always thinking of his native village, of his old parents, and of Jeannette.

It hurt him terribly to think that they would imagine that he was either dead, or had left them all; and he wished he could let them know where he was.

He came across a sergeant who could write, and he asked him to help him to send a letter to the old people at Kerentré; the letter took a week to compose, then it was legibly and clearly directed, and put into the sergeant's bag to be sent to France by the first vessel which might be going there. The squadron was attacked meanwhile by the English, the sergeant was killed in the fierce battle which ensued, and his bag fell into the sea with him.

Jean never found any one else to write a letter for him.

CHAPTER XIX.

“ For a few brief days the orchards are white with blossoms. They soon turn to fruit, or else float away upon the idle breeze. So it will be with present feelings.”

—*I. L. Cuyler.*

CHAPTER XIX.

JEANNETTE'S NEW DOLL.

THERE was great joy at the Chestnut Farm when a little child was born, a pretty healthy little thing who, all the women said, was likely to live.

They had all assembled to kiss the baby, and to congratulate its mother the faithful Gothon, who looked as happy and contented as woman could well look.

Thomas laughed and looked comically at his little daughter, whom he dared not touch, he said, lest he should break her.

After a time, when the baby had been sufficiently admired, all the good folks, with the exception of Agathe Gouarhé went to work in the fields.

Jeannette's employment that day was to weed a field at some considerable distance from the farm, so she took her dinner with her, as she was not likely to be home until the evening.

It was getting dark when, her day's labour over, she drew near to the Chestnut Farm; her little nephew, Mathieu, was running as fast as he could, evidently with the intention of meeting her.

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'Oh, Jeannette!' he said, when he got up to her, 'oh, Jeannette! there is such terrible news! Thomas was walking by the side of his cart, which was laden with heavy stones, when somehow or other the cart overturned, and the stones rolled down upon him, and one struck his head. Father and grandfather brought him home quite dead.'

Jeannette could only clasp her hands together and say 'Poor Gothon, does she know it? Mathieu, let me go to her, I want to see her.'

'They will not let you in; they say that the shock has killed her, that she will die too; the Curé is there and——'

But Jeannette did not wait to hear more. She ran at full speed towards the house, and pushed the door open very gently, and stood in the room where Gothon lay; she was speaking in faint and feeble tones. 'My poor little girl,' she said, 'left an orphan on the day of her birth.'

'Do not trouble about her, Gothon,' answered the farmer in trembling tones; 'you were as a daughter to us, and the child shall be brought up as one of our own grandchildren, if it should please God to call you to Himself. Go in peace—the child shall never want either bread or love.'

Gothon thanked him with a tender, grateful expression in her dying eyes; but even now she did not seem quite satisfied, she was evidently looking for someone whose absence she had noticed.

'Jeannette,' she said at last, 'is not Jeannette coming?'

At these words the girl went forward and fell on her knees by the side of Gothon's bed, and covered the poor hand which had often caressed her so tenderly when she was a little child, with kisses and tears.

Gothon smiled, and drawing her hand away, pointed to her child.

'Take her,' she murmured.

Jeannette lifted the baby and held her to her mother.

Gothon seemed to gather up all her strength to give one last, long, loving kiss to her little one, then she kissed Jeannette, and said :

'Keep her—I give her to you ; the Curé will tell you.'

They were the last words Gothon ever spoke. The Curé said the commendatory prayer. Ere it was over Gothon and Thomas were no longer divided, and Jeannette held the little orphan in her arms, her tears falling upon its baby face.

Two days afterwards there were two funerals in the little village churchyard; and after the husband and wife had been reverently laid in their quiet grave, the mourners returned to the Church, and the priest who had spoken those last solemn words over the father and mother proceeded to baptize the orphan child.

Pierre Gouarhé was the baby's godfather, Gothon herself had named Jeannette as its godmother.

When the Curé had asked Pierre Gouarhé whether he consented to be the child's godfather and protector, and stand to it in the place of a father, he paused for a

moment before he asked the same question of Jeannette, and he looked at her as though he would read her very soul.

‘My child,’ he said at last, ‘I promised Gothon when she was dying to speak to you for her, and here, in the presence of God, I am going to do it. She loved you, Jeannette, and because she loved you she has been very grieved about you for a long time. She saw you neglect your duties, she saw your head filled with vanity, she saw you give way to bad temper, and at last she saw you sad and discontented, dissatisfied with yourself and with everyone else, seeming even to have lost your trust in God.

‘Gothon shed many tears on your account, my child; but she did not despair of you: and she looked forward to the day when her dear Jeannette should come to herself, and return to her duty. God did not allow her to see that day; He called her to Himself, and you know that her last thought was for you. In leaving you her little child, Gothon did not think of the baby, but of you. The little one would not have wanted friends, but Gothon gave her to you as a guardian angel, to keep you from evil. She thought that when you had accepted the office of bringing up this child as a Christian child should be brought up, that you would better understand how to lead a Christian life yourself; she thought that to be able to say to your adopted child, “Be gentle, and patient, and courageous; seek your happiness in that station of life where it has pleased

God to place you, and never do anything to grieve those that love you," you would be obliged to set her an example of these virtues. Gothon trusted you, Jeannette; do not abuse her confidence.

'Be as you once were, rather you will be better and more worthy of love, because you will have fought and conquered, and "there is more joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, than over ninety-and-nine just persons that need no repentance."

'Ask yourself, therefore, whether you feel that you can be a true mother to this little girl, and that you will be able one day to answer for her soul to her mother and to God. If you feel that you can give up thinking of yourself and devote yourself to her, then accept Gothon's trust without fear. Be strong and courageous. God will help you; for it was for the shepherds and the poor, and the little ones, that the angels sang around the cradle of Bethlehem, "Peace on earth, good-will towards men." '

Jeannette's tears flowed fast, the sweet tears of penitence and reconciliation and peace descended into the poor troubled heart.

She pressed her lips upon the orphan's forehead; if Gothon could see into her soul, she would have known that her baby had found a mother.

The priest asked for no other answer than those prayers and that kiss, and he concluded the Baptismal Service. The little girl, at her mother's request, was called Jeannette, which after a time was converted into

Jeanneton, as it was somewhat inconvenient to have two names precisely alike in one family.

From that day Jeanneton was never to be seen without Jeannette, nor Jeannette without Jeanneton. The girl had somewhat of a struggle at first to take entire possession of her little one; for instance, Javotte declared that the thing was preposterous; the poor baby was sure to be killed, if left in the care of any one as inexperienced as her youngest sister; but her father came to the rescue, and said that Gothon had given the little one to Jeannette, and no one else must interfere with it. For my part, he added, 'I like this new doll for you far better than I did the old one.'

CHAPTER XX.

**“ My soul from darkness is released,
Like the whole sky when to the East
The morning doth return.”**

— *Wordsworth.*

CHAPTER XX.

JEANNETON.

TIME passed on, and Jeannette grew more than ever devoted to the orphan child; all the old selfish fancies vanished away completely; the softening influence of the little girl's love had already done the work Gothon had hoped and trusted it would do.

But still there was a danger in the new and all-engrossing interest which had come into the girl's life—there was the fear that she would love Jeanneton, her little treasure, her own precious possession, to the exclusion of everyone else; it was always Jeanneton and I, I and Jeanneton; there was no one else in all the world for the baby's adopted mother.

But it was Jeanneton who made all right in the end; she grew such a loving, endearing little maiden, that they all began to love her now for her own sake, as they had loved her hitherto for her father's and mother's sake. And Jeannette was grateful to them for their affection for 'her child,' and so the little one took up the broken links, which had been severed by Jeannette's

own fault, and fastened them together again with those sweet winning ways of hers.

One afternoon, Pierre Gouarhé came home from the fields to find Jeannette sitting before the door of the farm, teaching Jeanneton to dance ; a look was on the child's face that reminded him of her mother, and he bent down and kissed her, and he gave Jeannette a kiss too, and said, ' You are a good little mother, my child :'



from that day, all misunderstandings between the father and daughter were at an end for ever.

The relations between Javotte and her younger sister were also of a much more satisfactory nature, dating from the time when Jeanneton was cutting her first tooth, and Jeannette consulted the experienced mother of four children upon the best mode of treating her under the circumstances. ' Maman Nette ' was the name the

little one gave to her adopted mother; she was the idol of the whole farm, Cyrus included; and she was very merry, and quite ready to play with all of them, the only condition being that she should keep 'Maman Nette' within sight.

Jeannette had only retained one of the old habits she had first learnt at the Castle, and that was the habit of cleanliness—a somewhat rare one amongst the good people of Brittany. Jeanneton was always as fresh and clean as a rose.

Two years had passed away since that Autumn day when Jeannette, in her grief and despair, had taken flight from the Castle, and the family had just arrived at Kerléonik for their first visit since that time. A few days after their arrival, Lafleur arrived at the farm, saying that the Baroness wanted to see Jeannette at once.

The poor girl's heart beat when she received the message. There was, however, nothing for it but to obey; so she proceeded to dress herself and Jeanneton for the visit. Lafleur sat in the kitchen, and drank the farmer's cider, and found out the whole history of the pretty little girl he had seen in Jeannette's arms.

Then he took his departure for the Castle, and told the whole story of poor Thomas, and Gothon's death, and of the shepherdess' devotion to the little orphan.

Of course he got there long before Jeannette; so it was that, when she arrived, she found herself again in the midst of a group of servants; but this time they

moved on one side to let her pass, and looked at her respectfully, and whispered to each other their admiration of Jeanneton.

She was taken at once to Adelaide's room ; and that young lady, although she had grown into quite a fashionable '*demoiselle de société*,' was as delighted to see the young peasant as in the old days.

'Why did you not come before?' she said. 'Why did you wait until I sent for you? And how pretty you have grown! And you look so grave and sensible too! And where did you get that little girl? How lovely she is! Does she like chocolate? Oh, my little Jeannette, how glad I am to see you!'

Jeannette told her little one's history very simply and touchingly—so touchingly, indeed, that Mademoiselle Carmeline, who had hardly raised her eyes from the book she was engrossed in, looked up and said, 'You are a good, brave girl, Jeannette;' and two large tears rolled down Adelaide's fair cheeks.

That visit to the Castle quite removed the impression of that other one, the memory of which had always more or less haunted Jeannette.

The next day poor old Farmer Penvraz appeared at the Chestnut Farm: he looked more sad and weary than ever; his wife, he said, was very ill, and whilst he was at work—and work he must—there was no one to wait upon her; he had come to know if Pierre Gouarhé could spare him one of the farm servants for a time.

A great feeling of joy came into Jeannette's heart as she listened to the farmer's words. Had the time come at last, when she might show how bitterly she repented of the past, and be of some use to Jean's mother? But she hesitated before she offered to go to Kerentré—dared she do it? was she worthy of it? had she any right to do all a daughter ought to do for poor old Fanchon? At last, very timidly and without looking up, she said, 'If you would let me go and stay with her, I should be so glad to nurse the good Mother Fanchon. Jeanneton is not naughty; she never cries, and she will amuse you both with her pretty little ways and her baby ways. But perhaps you could not bear to have me with you—nor Mother Fanchon either.'

She looked so sad and penitent as she spoke that old Penvraz was touched, and told her that they had long ago forgiven the past, and because Jean had loved her they must always love her. Jeannette, in her delight at these kind words, kissed the old man, and ran off to pack up her own and Jeanneton's small wardrobes, so that there might be no delay when Pierre Gouarhé came home and gave his consent to the plan (which no doubt he would give) in starting for Kerentré.

The farmer came home, and said that Jeannette and Jeanneton might go: but it was easy to see that the parting cost him something, and all the other members of the family expressed their regret at the departure of the pair—even Javotte said she did not know what she should do without them. There was one other inmate

of the farm who also took his departure at that time, and that was Cyrus.

He had ceased to be a shepherd's dog ; he was getting too old and infirm for that ; and since his encounter with the wolf, a kind of rheumatism had settled in his limbs. His only business in life now seemed to be to bark and to play with Jeanneton, and he missed the little one so terribly that, after a good deal of whining and searching, he scented her to Kerentré, and straightway took up his abode there also.

CHAPTER XXI.

“ Sweet is the smile of Home, the mutual look
When hearts are of each other sure,
Sweet all the joys that crowd the household nook,
The haunt of all affections pure.”

—*Keble.*

CHAPTER XXI.

HOME AGAIN.

FIVE summers had rolled away—five long years—since Jean had gone away, and once more it was winter. Once more the Castle was empty, and the Baron and his family had returned to Versailles. Mademoiselle Adelaide had been presented at Court, and had created a great sensation; and it was whispered that before long she was likely to be married to the young Marquis de Mello, one of the most distinguished officers in the French army.

He had been wounded in the war, and had returned home invalided, and now he was waiting to rejoin the army in America, and he was always at Court, and never (so wrote Lisette to Madame Lorhan) lost an opportunity of showing some attention to Mademoiselle Adelaide. Lisette further expressed her own wishes that peace should be proclaimed before the young Marquis quitted France.

Peace! Jeannette heard Lisette's news, and perhaps she did not care as much as she ought to have done about the Marquis; but there are bullets and cannon-

balls and swords for soldiers as well as for officers. If peace were proclaimed, Jean would be in no danger of being shot, and perhaps he might yet come back to his country and to his old parents !

Meantime, whether it was peace or war, Jeannette's duty was in Jean's home, taking care of his sick mother, working with all her might to set all in order in the old farm.

For things had got very bad at Kerentré since Jean went away ; all spirit and energy seemed to have deserted the desolate old couple ; the house was falling into ruin, the fowls were neglected, or for some reason or another they refused to lay any eggs ; the garden was choked with weeds ; all was wretched and dispiriting, and Jeannette, God helping her, determined to improve things.

Old Mother Fanchon gradually grew stronger ; and when she no longer needed so much nursing, Jeannette was able to go out into the fields and outhouses, and work her very hardest. Jeanneton was somewhat of a trouble to her adopted mother in those days ; truth to tell, the little one had been accustomed to so much attention that she could not do without it ; and she resented Jeannette's refusal to leave her work in order to play with her as she had done at the Chestnut Farm.

But necessity made Jeannette firm, and in time the child learnt to be tractable and obedient ; her first lessons in the discipline of life were thus learnt in old Mother Fanchon's sick room.

One bright day towards the end of February, when falling snow lay thick upon the ground, Jeanneton and Cyrus were playing before the door of the farm, whilst Jeannette was attending to her household duties, and old Mother Fanchon sat and warmed her poor thin hands at the fire. Jeanneton was amusing herself by kicking the snow away with her little sabots, and seeing how far it would go, whilst Cyrus followed her closely, and whilst Jeanneton laughed heartily at her own exploits, he rolled upon the ground, his paws in the air, and seemed to be thoroughly enjoying his idle existence.

Then the little one tried to cover him with the snow which she took up in her tiny hands, and he ran away, and she followed him, until at last in their merry game, they got at some little distance from the house to where a lane led into the high road.

All of a sudden Jeanneton stopped; a man was turning the corner leading to the farm, and the child drew nearer to Cyrus, as though to place herself under his protection.

The dog at once jumped up and showed his white teeth, as much as to say to the intruder, 'Do not dare to touch my little lamb. I have been a shepherd's dog, and I have not yet forgotten my old business.'

The man neither looked wicked nor formidable, only he walked as though he were very tired, and stopped from time to time to look around him, as though he were trying to recall some old familiar scene; his clothes were in rags, and when he drew nearer to Jeanneton,

she was no longer afraid of him; she only pitied him, and thought how cold he must be. She went up to him boldly, and offered him a piece of bread which she had begun to eat.

‘Here, poor man,’ she said, ‘take my bread.’

The man looked at her, and the tears rose to his eyes. He took the bread without speaking, and his fingers were cold and trembling as he touched the child’s warm little hands.

‘Come and warm yourself at the fire,’ she said.

‘Where?’ he asked quickly; ‘at whose house?’

‘At Father Penvraz’s house. I live there now.’

‘You! what is your name, little one?’

‘Jeanneton, at your service.’ And she made him a low curtesy.

‘And to whom do you belong, Jeanneton?’

‘To Maman Jeannette,’ replied the child, who thought that everyone must know her dear little mother.

The traveller turned very white, and leaned upon his stick, as though to save himself from falling.

At that moment, Cyrus, who had been looking at him suspiciously whilst he was talking with Jeanneton, jumped upon him frantically and began to lick his hands, and to rub himself against him, and to put his paws upon his shoulders as he had once done to Jeannette, all those years ago when she was in such trouble.

‘Cyrus, my good Cyrus,’ said the poor man, ‘you know me then. You used to see me so often with Jeannette. Is she here? Is Jeannette here?’



Cyrus probably understood the question, for he began to trot towards the house, looking back every minute, as much as to say, 'This is the way, don't you remember it,—are you coming?'

Oh, he remembered it well! the poor exile who was coming home after all that long absence, and if he did not walk as quickly as Cyrus wished, it was because the beating of his heart caused his footsteps to lag.

His country! his fields! his dear old home! Oh, what glory it was to see them all again! But might he too allow himself to feel this joy? Who would he find in the house where he saw the curling smoke going up from the roof between the leafless trees.

Would his father and mother and brother be there? Were they still alive? And was Jeannette there; and if so, for what reason? The child had said:

'Maman Jeannette.'

Was she married? and was the old house her's and her husband's? Jean did not dare to approach it, and stood at some distance from the door. At that moment Jeannette appeared upon the threshold; she had come to see what had happened to Jeanneton and Cyrus, for she no longer heard her little one's merry laughter.

She looked at the stranger, then took two or three steps towards him, and then she did not hesitate.

Forgetting the past, thinking only of the joy that had come to his parents—even then she hardly thought of herself—she threw herself into his arms with a piercing

shriek, and welcomed him as a sister might have welcomed a brother whom she thought she had lost.

Jean strained her to his heart and sobbed like a child, whilst Cyrus jumped round them as though he had gone mad, and Jeanneton looked on with a very puzzled expression upon her sweet little face.

Then the old mother, hearing Jeannette's cry, came out to see what was the matter and in an instant, in spite of his rags and tatters, she recognized her brave boy.

Another minute, and the farmer coming home to his dinner joined the happy, thankful trio, who stood on the doorstep of the home that would be desolate no longer.

No one but Jeanneton did justice to the dinner that day; the others, even Cyrus, had too much to do and to think about to be able to eat.

CHAPTER XXII.

“The combat deepens, on ye brave,
Who rush to glory, or the grave.”

—*Campbell.*

CHAPTER XXII.

JEAN'S STORY.

GREAT happiness, just as much as great sorrow, takes away the power of speech ; you might have heard a mouse run across the room where the Penvraz's and Jeannette were assembled.

Even Jeanneton, seeing the others so strangely silent, dared not speak, and her little lips trembled as though she meditated a cry.

Jean sat between his father and mother, and each of them held one of his hands tightly, and Jeannette went from the fire-place to the table, and from the table to the fire-place, under pretence of serving food which was not touched, whilst all the time she was casting furtive glances at Jean, who sat there so still and quiet.

Oh, how he had changed ! It seemed as though fifteen years had passed over the lad's life, and made a middle-aged man of the once bright joyous youth.

And as she looked at him, a great feeling of pity and of love came into Jeannette's breast. The dinner—rather the pretence of dinner—was over. Jeannette washed up

the plates and set the room in order, and bustled about, leaving the father and mother and son to themselves.

The bright February day drew to a close ; it was Jeanneton's bedtime, and her adopted mother began to undress her ; but she did not play with the child that night as was her wont ; she was silent and grave, and pre-occupied, and the little one resented it, and looked at Jean defiantly.

'Does that nasty man make you sad ?' she asked.

Jeannette only bent her head over her darling, and kissed her ; and then Jeanneton, somewhat re-assured, knelt down to say her evening prayers.

'Please God bring poor Jean safely home,' said the sweet childish voice.

'He has come, my darling ; the good God has given him back to us ; you must not say that prayer again ; you must say 'Thank God for having brought Jean safely home.'

Jeanneton, who was a sharp little maiden, began to understand ; she repeated her godmother's words, and then she held up her little finger, and pointed at the wanderer and said,—

'I know who that is ; it is poor Jean.'

He heard the words, and smiled at the child ; whereupon she ran up to him, and threw her arms round his neck, and insisted that no one but 'poor Jean' should carry her to bed ; and she went to sleep murmuring, 'Good-night, poor Jean.'

After the child had gone to bed, the others sat round

the fire, and began to find words in which to speak to each other.

'Oh, it has been a hard time,' said the poor old father, but it is all passed now—five years without seeing you, and only once did we hear of you, and that was from Jeannette : she came from S. Luc to tell us the news. She has been so good; without her, all through this last winter I think we should both have been dead. She has worked for us as a daughter of our own could not have done; she nursed your mother, she helped us to pay our taxes, and through it all she has been sweet, and tender, and patient as an angel !'

Jean listened to this eulogy upon Jeannette with mingled joy and regret.

She had become all he knew that she could become if she only did herself justice; she was now all that he wished his wife to be. And she was the wife of another. Where was her husband? How had he ever made up his mind to leave his wife and child?

Perhaps after all the farm belonged to him, and he allowed old Penvraz and his wife to live there out of charity? Or could it be that Jeannette was a widow?

A single question would have elicited the answer he longed, and yet dreaded, to hear; but that question Jean dared not ask.

After a time, bit by bit, Jean told the story of his life for the last five years; part of it we already know, the remainder is yet to be told.

He was taken prisoner by the English during the

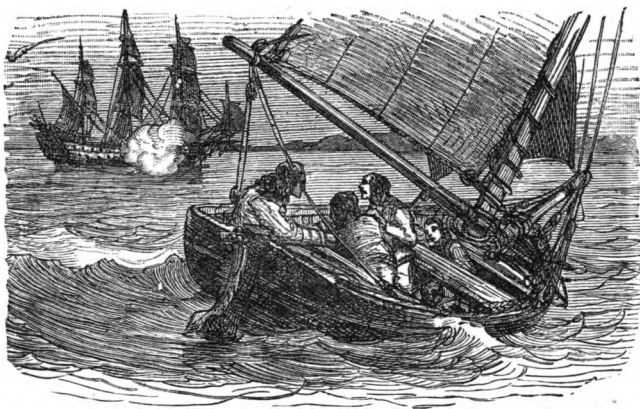
American War of Independence, in the beginning of the previous year, and with numbers of his fellow-soldiers, was conveyed to England, and imprisoned in one of the hulks, which were then the customary places of detention of prisoners of war. Jean and five other men determined, as soon as opportunity offered, to try and effect their escape, and on Christmas night they managed it.

The hulk lay at anchor, not far from the shore ; they knocked out a port-hole from the side of the old ship, and let themselves down by a rope, one by one, into the sea ; it was easy enough then to swim to the shore. Two of the fugitives were sailors ; the other four soldiers. After landing they walked along until they found an empty boat, and they again put to sea ; and after nearly dying of cold and hunger, they gained the coast of France. Many a time they were fired upon by the English men-of-war, but God watched over them, and they regained their native land in safety.

They did not in the least know where they were, and could not help fearing that they might find themselves in England again ; no one was to be seen on the desolate coast, where their little boat ran into a creek : only a goat was browsing between the stones of the beach, where a little dry grass was to be found. The men milked the goat, and the milk saved their lives. By-and-by an old woman appeared in a violent passion, for the goat was hers, and they had taken an unwarrantable liberty ; but never had words sounded so sweet to



their ears as the words the old woman spoke that day, for they were spoken in their own language. They explained their circumstances to the goat's mistress, and she was propitiated in an instant. She took them home with her, and gave them food, and insisted upon their sleeping in her barn; and the next day the six men separated, each to try and get to his home as soon as possible.



It was on the northern coast of Brittany that they had landed, and Jean had begged his way to Kerléonik, and now he was at home.

‘I did not know what might have happened,’ he said when he had told his tale; ‘and during those five years I was almost afraid to come to the old farm.’

Poor Jean! He felt that he hardly knew yet what *had* happened; but it was too late for any more talk

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that night, for the cock in the fowl-house began to crow loudly, and Fanchon Penvraz declared that that particular cock never crowed except at midnight.

CHAPTER XXIII.

True, the thought of time departed
Ever near should be,
When I felt so lonely hearted,
And you came to me.
Thus my future hopes must borrow
Sunshine from the past,
Upon all the hidden morrow,
Light be onward cast.

—*Fletcher.*

CHAPTER XXIII.

AN ANSWER TO AN OLD QUESTION.

IF the cock that crowed at midnight found the good folks at Kerentré still sitting round the hearth, the old chanticleer who always, according to Fanchon Penvraz, welcomed the first gleam of dawn, found Jeannette up and busy, with a look upon her usually grave face that had not been seen there for years. She sang as she did her work, and although she did not sing the words 'Jean has come home,' they were the motive power that inspired that little unwonted burst of gaiety.

Jean had slept in the barn, and now there came a gentle knock at the door, and Jeannette opened it, to see him standing there, no longer in rags, but dressed in his old holiday attire. He was pale and thin, of course, but there was a look of the old Jean come back upon the worn face with the donning of those old clothes.

It was Jeannette's turn to talk now; to tell the story of the poor old people's troubles, and of the kindness of Mademoiselle Adelaide (at the mention of her name Jean pulled a wry face), to whom she had gone for help in their great need, and whilst she was in the midst of

her narrative, a merry little face, with tangled hair, appeared in the doorway ; it was Jeanneton, who wanted to be dressed.

‘There is my little one,’ said Jeannette ; ‘I must go to her ; and I have a great deal to do. I cannot stay and talk to you now, I must milk the cows, and feed the cattle, and get the breakfast ready. You had better go to your father and mother now, they will be so glad to see you looking like your old self.’



As they all sat at breakfast that morning (and it is satisfactory to be able to relate that they did ample justice to the meal), Pierre Gouarhé suddenly appeared.

He had been told that a suspicious-looking character had been seen wandering about in the neighbourhood of Kerentré the day before, and he feared lest some

harm might be meditated against the old people or his girl.

Of course, his joy and surprise were very great when he found that the 'suspicious character' was none other than the long-lost Jean.

A day of excitement followed Gouarhé's early visit. The news of Jean's return had spread far and wide, and the Breton people, from miles around, came to see him, and to hear the account of his wonderful escape.

A marvellous story had got abroad, which it is not to be wondered at that the good folk wished to authenticate. It was stated that Jean Penvraz and his companions had swam across the sea from England to Brittany, reposing occasionally upon the back of an enormous fish, which followed them expressly for that obliging purpose. Everyone was very merry, everyone laughed, and talked, and congratulated, only, there was a dead weight upon poor Jeannette's heart; for Jean had told her that morning, that his time of service had not yet expired, that the war was still going on, and he must rejoin his regiment at once; otherwise, he might be seized as a deserter.

Late in the evening, when all the guests had gone, Jean said to Jeannette:

'Tell me where Thomas and Gothon have gone. Why did they not come here to-day?'

Then Jeannette told the sad story of the death of the husband and wife in the same day. And she added:

'The poor little one will never know her parents! They tell me that I spoil her, and make life too sweet

for her, for some day she must learn its hardness. But how can I do otherwise, poor darling? I must try to make up to her for all she has lost.'

A light began to dawn upon Jean.

'Their little one,' he repeated, dreamily. 'Where is she?'

'There she is,' answered Jeannette, pointing to the child who had fallen fast asleep. Jean did not speak, but he went up to the bench where Jeanneton was lying, and covered her face with kisses.

'Do not awake her,' said Jeannette, laughing. Then Jean went back to her, and she told him all, not keeping back one word of what the Curé had said on the day of Jeanneton's baptism.

After a time he spoke.

'Jeannette,' he said, 'you remember that day at Pierre Longues?'

'Yes,' answered the girl in a low voice.

'If I were to ask you the same question to-day as I asked then, would your answer be different?'

Then Jeannette looked up into the worn, manly face and answered,—

'If you only think me good enough, Jean, I will try to make you happy. I did not expect this; all I wanted was your forgiveness.'

'We will not speak of that, Jeannette. I was in the wrong, too. I wanted to dictate to you, and to be your master, and that is not the way to win love. We have both learnt our lesson; we understand each other now.'

For all answer Jeannette gave him her hand; her heart was too full for words.

‘Good-night, Jean,’ she said at last; ‘you are very tired, and I must go and put my doll to bed. Ah, you do not understand! They always call Jeanneton my doll at the farm—she is not very like the other, is she?’

‘And is it this doll who has undone the work of the other, and given me back my little wife? I shall love her dearly, Jeannette, if only out of gratitude. Jeanneton will have found a father, and Gothon will rejoice over her child.’

CHAPTER XXIV.

Our work is noble, pain is good,
If its true end be understood,
 Its lessons read aright.
All love and joy by God are given,
To lead us to His holy heaven,
 To teach us its delight.

—*Thoughts from a Girl's Life.*

CHAPTER XXIV.

A PRISONER AGAIN.

THE next day Jean, in spite of his great happiness, was weak and ailing ; his head ached, and his hands were burning, and he seemed hardly able to move.

His mother and Jeannette were very troubled about him, but he said that it was only over-fatigue, and that he hoped to be all right by the next day, as he felt he ought to go and report himself to the Mayor of the next town, and take steps to rejoin his regiment.

His poor old mother wept bitterly when she heard this, but he consoled her by telling her that there were rumours of peace, and that before another year had elapsed he should probably obtain his discharge.

Jean was *not* better the next day ; he was very much worse. For a whole week he lay in the delirium of fever ; then, when he regained consciousness, came long weary days of slowly returning strength, and nearly a month had elapsed since his return home before he was able, leaning upon Jeannette's arm, to walk slowly up and down the path, in front of the farm.

It was Shrove Tuesday. Jeannette was busy making pancakes, which little Jeanneton with infinite delight handed to the old people, and to Papa Jean, as she chose to call him; when suddenly the tramp of many feet was heard outside the door, and Jean rose to open it, and turned white as death, as he saw who the visitors were—none other than a body of *policemen*. Their errand was soon told: they demanded the person of Jean Penvraz, soldier, accused of the crime of desertion.

‘I am Jean Penvraz,’ said the poor fellow. ‘I escaped from an English hulk, and crossed over to France in a boat; and as I was near home, I came to see my old father and mother, before I rejoined my regiment. I have been ill, and unable to move; I had intended to try and get away to-morrow, but God’s will be done.’

He kissed his father and mother and Jeannette, and held out his hands for the handcuffs. His poor old mother burst into a passionate flood of tears.

‘My child! my poor child! the only one left to me!’ she cried. ‘Oh, sir, indeed he is telling you the truth; he only came to see us. We had only heard of him once in all the five long years he was away, and he was taken ill, and could not move. Oh, sir, have pity on him! have pity on me!’ The officer, like a great many other people, took refuge in what seemed like brutality, in order to hide his feelings.

‘This is all nonsense,’ he said; ‘get out of the way, old woman; and you, my lad, march off.’

Jean obeyed; he stood on the threshold of his home,

and took one last look at those he loved so well ; at his poor old father and mother, and at little Jeanneton, who was screaming loudly. Jeannette was not there : he wished he could have said good-bye to her ; good-bye for ever in this world ; and in his heart the poor fellow accused her of indifference.

He was mistaken. At the end of the path which led from the house the girl stood looking calm and brave ; she went up to the officer and curtsied low.



‘Is he accused of the crime of desertion?’ she said, respectfully.

The man was touched with pity for the girl, who had come there to question him out of hearing of the broken-hearted old parents.

He bowed his head in token of assent.

‘And . . . is it true that deserters—are shot?’

'Deserters in time of war . . . well, it is a serious matter, my poor girl.'

'He is not a deserter, sir! he is innocent. They cannot take away the life of an innocent man, the King will not allow it! Jean will tell his story, and they will see that he is not a deserter!'

'The council of war does not listen to explanations,' said the officer; 'a man is found away from his regiment, and he is considered a deserter, and a deserter cannot be acquitted. If he had come back of his own accord, all would have been well; but a month has passed since he escaped from prison, and he is found in his own home. You spoke of the King just now. The King can pardon a condemned man, although he cannot prevent a deserter from being condemned.'

Jeannette was silent for a moment.

'When will he be tried?' she asked, at last, as though some new idea had struck her.

'Not just yet; a good many deserters will be brought up together. It will not be for a fortnight, perhaps rather longer; and if you have any interest with any great person, perhaps you might be allowed to see the poor fellow again before——'

'Thank you, sir; be kind to my poor Jean.'

'*Au revoir*, my Jean, rely upon me!'

An hour afterwards, Jeannette, with Jeanneton in her arms, was at the Chestnut Farm.

'Father! Mother!' she said, 'a great trouble has come to us at Kerentré! I have come to ask your

blessing, and your leave to take a long journey. Jean is arrested as a deserter, and deserters are shot. Only the King can pardon him ; I am going to find him and ask him to do so.'

The Gouarhé's were greatly troubled ; the poor mother began to cry, and Javotte kissed Jeannette, and whispered how sorry she was for her, and the children cried—they hardly knew why.

Pierre Gouarhé took his daughter into his strong arms and pressed his lips upon her forehead.

'Jeannette,' he said, 'you are a good girl ; may God bless and protect you, for you richly deserve to succeed. But you shall not go alone. Listen to me, all of you. I leave my eldest son in charge of the house ; obey him as you would obey me. I am going with Jeannette to find the King.'

His wife in vain tried to prove to him and to Jeannette that their errand would prove a useless one ; that Paris was more than a thousand leagues off, and that they would never be able to reach it. Moreover, that the King was surrounded by a body of men, who ran their swords through everyone who tried to approach him ; and that it was perfect folly to say that Jean would be put to death, he, who never, all through his life, had harmed anyone.

But father and daughter were bent upon their mission. Javotte packed up their fête-day clothes in a little bundle, so that they might appear properly attired before the King ; then she ordered Jervoise (poor Thomas's

successor) to saddle the two farm horses, and to be ready to accompany him to Grémigny, a town about twelve leagues from Kerléonik.

They would get there that night, and send back the the horses, which could not be spared from the farm, the next day.

CHAPTER XXV.

Behind the clouds is the sun still shining ;
Some days *must* be dark and dreary.

—*Longfellow.*

CHAPTER XXV.

FROM KERLEONIK TO VERSAILLES.

THE horses were sent back; the weary walk from Grémigny to Versailles was to begin. In the cold grey dawn of the February morning, Pierre Gouarhé and Jeannette, carrying little Jeanneton in her arms, set out on their errand of love and mercy.

Day after day they walked on, the child sometimes running by their side in gleeful mirth, sometimes perched upon her godfather's shoulder, driving him with a little stick, and pretending he was her horse. They met with great kindness by the way; they got an occasional lift in a cart; it did not help them on much as far as speed was concerned, but it saved their tired legs, and enabled them to start afresh.

One night Jeannette, who had walked the whole day long, and had very little food, fell fainting by the road side.

It was dark, and there was no house near, and poor Pierre Gouarhé prayed aloud for help in his trouble, whilst Jeanneton stood screaming by his side. 'O God Almighty,' cried the poor fellow, 'Thou Who canst do

all things, help me now, or my children will die this night !’

Then there came along the road the tramp of a horse, and the steady light of a lantern shone out in the darkness. Pierre Gouarhé rushed up to the horse.

‘Get out of the way, man,’ said its rider ; ‘I am but a poor priest ; I have neither gold nor silver to give you.’



‘Have pity on my daughter, Monsieur le Curé,’ was the answer, spoken in a tone of agony.

The priest held his lantern to the man’s face, and read there, that he was telling the truth.

‘Where is your daughter ?’ he said. ‘Ah, I see. Hold Cocotte’s bridle, I have some wine here, and I am something of a doctor. I will give her a little, and it will revive her,’ and the good old man got down from

his horse, and knelt by Jeannette's side, and poured the wine down her throat, and in a very few minutes she sat up, and declared that she was quite able to continue the road to Versailles.

'No, no,' laughed the Curé, 'that you shall not do. I tell you I am half a doctor. I am just returning now from visiting some of my patients, and taking them some good food, which my housekeeper prepares for them; you must come home with me to-night; you and the little one shall ride Cocotte, and your father and me must walk: it is not more than half-a-league to my house.'

The half-league was accomplished in a very short time. Cocotte walked briskly on; and Jeannette, holding Jeanneton in her arms, felt as though new courage had come to her, for the priest had said, 'There are some of my people going to Versailles to-morrow: they have room in their carriage; doubtless, they will take these poor things with them, if I ask them to do so.'

Poor girl! that day, for the first time, she had felt hopeless. Versailles was still so far off; and if by any chance the trial were to take place before the end of the fortnight which the police-officer had spoken about, it might be too late to plead with the King for Jean's pardon. Dame Gertrude, the housekeeper, was not best pleased to see her master arrive home in such company, but she was soon pacified when she heard the travellers' story; and oh, what a luxurious night the poor things spent in the good Curé's house!

The priest fulfilled his promise. Early the next morning he went to visit one of his parishioners, and came back with the welcome news, that in two hours the good lady would start for Versailles, and she would be only too glad to take Pierre Gouarhé, and his daughter, and little Jeanneton with her.

It was on the evening of the ninth day after their departure from Kerléonik that the Breton peasants arrived at Versailles. They went to a little inn called *La Croix Verte* (the Green Cross), the first that they came upon on their entrance into the town. It was too late to try and find the Baron that night; they must curb their impatience until the morning.

CHAPTER XXVI.

So soon as I can win the offended King,
'Twill be known your advocate.

—*Oymbeline.*

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE RIGHT ROYAL PRESENCE.

AS they walked through the streets, at what seemed to them a very late hour, the next morning the Versailles people turned to look at them, and to admire them. It was an unwonted sight to see Breton peasants in the royal town, and these were such a charming-looking set—the old man with his white hair flowing over his shoulders, his large hat upon his head, and, for the rest, attired in his holiday garb, looked respectable enough to visit anyone, even the King himself; whilst the sweet-looking, pale girl, and the rosy child trotting by her side, looked as though they had come out of some old-world picture.

Lisette was standing at the window of the Baron's house when she caught sight of the group; she rushed down the steps and caught hold of Jeannette, and greeted her with the greatest enthusiasm:

‘Mademoiselle Adelaide will indeed be delighted to see you,’ she exclaimed; ‘you must come to her at once,’ and she opened a door and drew back a curtain,

and pushed Jeannette gently into a room where Adelaide sat, playing the piano.

‘Jeannette, you here!’ cried Adelaide, joyfully, ‘and your father, and Jeanneton’ (the two were standing in the doorway, hand-in-hand); ‘what does it all mean?’

In a few words Jeannette told her tale, and explained the object of her long journey—it was to ask the Baron to take her to the King, so that she might beg him to pardon poor innocent Jean.

‘Oh!’ answered Adelaide, sadly, ‘how sorry I am! And now my father has gone away for some days. I do not quite know when he will be back; but stay!—I have thought of something. Yes, that will do. I will get ready at once, and will come with you. I know a lady who has great influence and power. We will go to her; she is an early riser, and I dare say is now in her garden. I will be with you in an instant. Make haste, Lisette, dress me at once.’

She was as good as her word. In an incredibly short time she re-appeared, accompanied by Mademoiselle Carmeline; and a footman at the same time announced that the carriage was ready. Adelaide seized Jeannette’s hand:

‘We must make haste,’ she said. ‘We can all get into the carriage, and your father can sit with the coachman. My mother thinks what I am going to do will make everything right; she will see you when you come back.’

The coachman evidently knew where to go. He

drove quickly through the streets of the town, then through a long avenue, and stopped at last at a closed gate. A porter appeared, and Adelaide, who had already got down and held little Jeanneton by the hand, asked the man a question in a low voice.

‘Yes, Mademoiselle,’ was the answer; and Adelaide signed to Pierre Gouarhé and Jeannette to follow her.

They passed through a most lovely garden, where white-necked swans swam in silvery ponds, and meadows and woods seemed mingled in strange confusion with beds of beautiful flowers and feathery ferns.

It was all so fair to look upon that little Jeanneton ventured to ask Jeannette in a whisper, whether it was the garden of Eden?

‘Here we are,’ said Adelaide to Jeannette, pointing out a group of cottages with thatched roofs.

Gaily dressed ladies and gentlemen stood at the open windows, and Jeannette wondered to see them there. She thought such grand people ought to live in palaces, not in small houses such as these were.

‘Wait a minute,’ said Adelaide, ‘I am going to announce you.’

She crossed a little bridge, and turned to the left, and entered a cottage which stood a little apart from the others.

She was back again directly.

‘It is all right,’ she said, smiling; ‘you must tell your story to the lady who is waiting to see you, as you told it to me this morning; do not be afraid of tiring

her. She is very kind, and remember she may be able to obtain Jean's pardon.'

Jeannette followed her protectress into the cottage, her heart beating fast, her limbs trembling.

There were marble floors and tables in the little dwelling, such as she had been accustomed to see at the Castle; and on the latter were pots of exquisite flowers, and jars of milk and cream; and several young ladies, dressed in a way that reminded Jeannette very much of Chloris' attire, were beating up the cream, and laughing at their attempts to make butter.

'It is that lady,' whispered Adelaide—'the tallest, with the bright colour and blue eyes—go and kiss her hand; do not be frightened.' She pushed Jeannette gently forward; in a moment the girl was kneeling at the feet of the blue-eyed lady, who was smiling on her graciously.

'You are Jeannette, are you not?' said a sweet voice. 'Come get up, my child. I am told you have a favour to ask; speak, do not be afraid.'

She held out a lovely white hand, sparkling with jewels, and Jeannette kissed it respectfully; then, gathering up all her courage, in a low, clear voice she told her of Jean's escape from prison; of his wish to see his old father and mother before he rejoined his regiment; of his illness, and his subsequent capture.

'Poor Jean!' said the lady, pityingly. 'Is he your brother, little one?'

Blushing and trembling more than ever, Jeannette

explained the relations between herself and Jean. The lady smiled as she listened to the honest, simple avowal.

‘And you love Jean very much?’ she said.

‘Oh yes, Madame: and besides, it is not only that—if Jean dies, I shall have killed him.’

‘You! why you hardly look like a murderess. Explain yourself, child.’

Then Jeannette, feeling that Jean’s life depended upon what she said, spoke out more boldly than she had done yet, and told of her folly and vanity, of her rejection of Jean’s honest love, and of the grief which had driven him far from his home on that summer’s day, and caused him to be forced into being a soldier.

Adelaide listened to the poor girl’s story, and for the first time understood the share she had had in Jeannette’s wrong-doing. The tears were in her eyes as she joined her entreaties to those of the peasant girl, and threw herself on her knees before the sweet-looking lady, and said,—

‘I am really the cause of poor Jean’s danger. Oh! for my sake as well as for hers, grant his pardon.’

‘Be comforted, Adelaide; I will arrange it all. Monsieur de Vaudreuil, the Marquis de Mello, is not here; I thought I had said he was to come to-day.’

‘He is just arriving, Madame.’

‘That is well; tell him I want to speak to him. You told me, Jeannette, did you not, that your Jean served under the Comte de Grasse?’

‘Yes, Madame.’

‘Well, the gentleman who has just come in is his Colonel. Monsieur de Mello,’ she continued, addressing the young officer, ‘I sent for you to Trianon to-day to give you your brevet rank; the King charged me to say how glad he was to bestow it on one so brave as you are. Now I have a little favour to ask at your hands. A Colonel never refuses the first request of a lady. It concerns a poor soldier, whom I do not want to be shot: he is accused of being a deserter.’

‘Jean is not a deserter,’ interrupted Pierre Gouarhé, who up to that moment had not opened his lips. ‘He served the King faithfully for five years. He was ill, and he was not able to go back to his regiment; but he is no deserter.’

The lady looked up with a frown upon her fair brow. She was not accustomed to be interrupted when she chose to speak, but her wrath was quickly appeased when she saw the grand old man who so bravely defended poor Jean.

‘Is he Jean’s father?’ she said to Jeannette.

‘No, Madame, he is *my* father; he came with Jeanneton and me.’

‘Oh, Jeanneton is that pretty little girl. Bring her to me. Can you speak, little one?’

‘Oh yes, Madame,’ answered the child, with her little country curtesy.

‘Well, tell that gentleman to give Jean his dismissal. Tell him also that if he does so, it will give great pleasure to Mademoiselle Kerléonik—how will you answer that, Monsieur de Mello?’

'I can only say, Madame, that a soldier cannot be spared in time of war; but I will write and give orders that Jean Penvraz is not to be tried as a deserter; and when peace is proclaimed, he can go back to his friends.'

'I hope peace *will* soon be proclaimed,' answered the lady, smiling brightly. 'There will be numbers of marriages then; of one, in particular, I shall be only too delighted to sign the contract. Good-bye, Colonel. Give your hand to Mademoiselle Kerléonik; and go and tell the Baron and Baroness of the new honour the King has conferred upon you. Good-bye, my little Jeannette. Jean is saved; and I mean to give you your marriage portion.'

'Thank her Majesty, Jeannette,' said Adelaide, laughing.

'Is that the Queen?' said Jeannette, seized with a sudden fear.

'Yes, it is the Queen,' repeated Marie Antoinette. 'I told your protectress not to tell you who it was you were coming to see. If you had known it, perhaps you would not have liked to tell me your story. It is very sad to be a Queen, and to feel that everyone is afraid of you.'

'Jeanneton is not afraid,' said the little one, boldly. 'Jeanneton loves the beautiful lady, and Jeannette loves her, too, because she has prevented Jean from being killed.'

The Queen smiled; then she stooped forward and

R

kissed the child, whilst Jeannette, who had recovered her composure, thanked her with tears of joy.

No words can tell the happiness of the homeward journey, or the joy and gratitude of the poor old father and mother when they heard that their brave Jeannette had obtained Jean's pardon from the Queen. They had always loved the girl with all her faults; she was doubly dear to them now, for they knew that to her, under God's blessing, they owed the life of their soldier son.



CHAPTER XXVII.

Most happy he that can at last atchyve
The joyous safety of so sweet a rest ;
Whose least delight sufficeth to deprive
Remembrance of all paines which him opprest.

—*Spenser.*

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE END OF CHLORIS.

SPRING had passed away, summer also ; then, when autumn came, there was great rejoicing, for peace was proclaimed ; and the fear and anxiety, which had been in many a heart, gave way to deep, intense thankfulness.

A few weeks more, and the winter snow was on the ground ; but all was warmth and joy and brightness in the old Castle of Kerléonik.

For Adelaide was there with her husband, the brave young Marquis de Mello, and the Breton folk could not make enough of their young lady and the gallant soldier.

Jeannette was the very first person to welcome her benefactors ; for it was to Adelaide that she owed Jean's life ; she it was whom she had to thank for the marriage-portion which the Queen had sent her ; and it was the Marquis de Mello who had insisted that a substantial new house should be built, at his expense, upon the spot where the old tumble-down farm of Kerentré had once stood.

The house was ready now—a comfortable-looking dwelling, with its red roof and its green shutters; and the Baron had given some fields to old Penvraz; and Jeannette, with the Queen's gift, had bought some cows; and the old farmer and his wife were half-wild with joy. Never in all their most sanguine dreams, they said, had they expected to be landed proprietors in their old age. Adelaide and her husband won golden opinions at Kerléonik; she was as bright and charming as ever. Her great delight was to take her husband to visit all the poor in the neighbourhood; and she was so tender and generous to them all, that he was obliged to ask her to keep a little of her goodness for the people at Mello, whither he was going to conduct his bride. They went at last; the Baron and Baroness returned to Versailles, and the Castle was once more shut up.

Jean meanwhile had returned to Kerentré, having obtained his discharge in due form. The villagers had the pleasure of seeing him for *one* day in his soldier's uniform. The next he appeared in the old familiar dress, which was to be his for life—the dress of a simple Breton peasant.

The wedding-day was fixed; such a wedding as it was! The Baron insisted upon coming home for it, and himself giving the bride away; and his little son (grown out of the baby we once knew) was inclined to quarrel with his father for the honour of conducting Jeannette to church. 'He was a man now,' he said; 'he had a little sword, which his brother-in-law had given him;

and there was no reason why he should not do so.' But it was represented to him that Jeanneton would be more suited to his height; and at last he submitted to walk with the pretty little girl, with a tolerably good grace.

The wedding is over: the old Penvraza and the young Penvraza, and Jeanneton, are very happy in the new home, with all the old surroundings about it. There let us leave them, knowing that whether, in the yet untried path of the future, joy or sorrow may be their portion, they will bow humbly to the loving Hand which orders all things for their good.

One more glimpse into the old-new home, and this simple tale is told.

There was an old oak wardrobe at the Chestnuts which Pierre Gouarhé made a present to his daughter; and a few days after the wedding it arrived at Kerentré.

Jeannette had mounted a ladder to dust the top shelf, when suddenly she gave a little cry, and the colour rushed into her face.

'What is the matter? Have you hurt yourself?' said Jean anxiously.

Jeannette laughed.

'No; it is all right; only if you knew what I have found here, at top of the old wardrobe. Wait! Hold out your hands.'

And she threw down an extraordinary-looking object, all covered with the dust of six years; an object which, for a moment, was quite unrecognisable.

Then Jean began to understand what the faded

skirts, and the dirty hat, and the white, or rather black, lamb meant,—it was Chloris, the unhappy Chloris, come to light at last.

Jeannette descended from her ladder, and joined her husband.

‘There she is,’ she said, and she sighed, and a tear rolled down her cheek.

‘What, Jeannette, are you crying? Is this thing always to make you unhappy?’

‘I cannot help it,’ answered Jeannette, smiling; ‘but I am only sad when I look at poor Chloris; because I think how foolish I was to let her lead me into so much trouble, and to give so much trouble to everyone else.’

‘Wait a minute,’ said Jean, ‘she shall never trouble you again. Jeanneton had better not see her—judged, condemned, executed—one, two, three; you don’t care about her, my Jeannette, do you?’

‘No, not a bit; chop her head off, if you like.’

Jean took up his hatchet, and poor Chloris was beheaded, and subsequently buried in a hole in the garden.

Just as the earth had covered the faded skirts, Jeanneton appeared, dragging Cyrus after her. She ran and threw herself into Jean’s arms.

He kissed her tenderly, and, giving her to Jeannette, said in trembling tones:

‘Your father was right; this doll is better worth caring for than the other. We are very happy, are we not, my wife? and I think a great deal of our happiness is little Jeanneton’s work.’

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